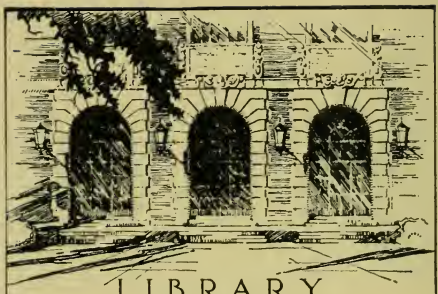

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WILLOUGHBY;

OR

REFORMATION

THE INFLUENCE

OF

RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE DECISION," "CAROLINE ORMSBY,"

"VILLAGE COUNSEL," &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

THE READER.

To enforce the necessity of true Religion on the conduct of man, and to shew that no repentance can be permanent which is not founded on the Doctrines of Revelation, are the leading objects of the following story; and however imperfectly such momentous opinions may be expressed, the forbearance of a rigid criticism is earnestly supplicated by

THE AUTHOR.

n. hes. 1 Pay 4 Apr. 52 Sal held 2 v.

WILLOUGHBY.

CHAPTER I.

In all the vicissitudes of life, whether of fortune fame, health, or of dear and domestic deprivations, what is the mind's support? Whence that energy of spirit which best guards it from presumption or despair, which leads it to rest on a firmer basis for unchangeable happiness, than sublunary joys can supply? Where is the charm that can soften the keenness of disappointment, proceeding from the delusions of human friendship, from the " spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes," from " the pangs of despised love," or from the destruction of those air built fabrics so continually raised by the anticipating spirit of man? A firm conviction of the wisdom, the justice, and the mercy of an over-ruling Providence, can alone render us resigned to the will, and acquiescent to the purposes of God.

The recollection of some painful events had led to this subject in the mind of an affectionate husband and father—he had given expression to his thoughts, and his words were ever treasured by the two dear companions of his life. But Mr. Coventry never delighted to dwell on the gloomy side of things, religion had taught him to be cheerful, and the more deeply he was affected by its truths, the more manfully he could bear the pressure of any worldly disappointment, or enjoy the blessings with which he was surrounded. One bitter drop in the cup of life too deeply mixed, sometimes called forth all the fortitude of his nature: the thoughtless and extravagant conduct of an only son—his neglect of home, more from the pernicious habits he had acquired in the world, than deliberate vice, had touched the fortune, and wounded the hearts of his parents; his neglect of home had led him into the society of gay unprincipled men, and to vie in expence with the inconsiderate and extravagant had been the means of accumulating debts of which even his father was totally ignorant. Mr. Coventry, willing to give a turn to conversation which had led to the unavailing regrets of a mother, and the kind excuses of a sister, for the continued neglect

and absence of his son, took up, as was his usual evening custom, a favourite author, for their joint instruction and amusement. After closing the book, and making some appropriate remarks on the subject in question, and previous to the hour of rest; Mr. Coventry said, " Now tell me Elizabeth of the gay plans you are devising for to-morrow's festivity, the birth-day of my child is no unimportant celebration." With all the naivetè of a light and innocent heart she playfully trifled with her father's curiosity: the fond parents smiled, and giving her their blessing with more than usual fervour, they parted with different anticipations of the pleasures for the following day.

At the hour of breakfast, Elizabeth received a letter from her brother, requesting her to make every proper excuse to his parents, for being obliged to absent himself on such a gala day, adding all that could soften her own disappointment, and convince her, that his inclination accorded not with an unforeseen but inevitable engagement. Elizabeth endeavoured to suppress her own regrets; and giving the letter to her father said; " See, my dear Sir, how philosophically I bear this disappointment: Wil-

loughby, our dear Willoughby, cannot be here to-day; I could indeed have dispensed with the attendance of the most obsequious of my slaves, rather than with his. I am sure his engagement must be a very absolute one, to oblige him to write such an excuse. But come, dear father, (affectionately pressing his arm, as he left the room in silence,) we will not be uncomfortable on this day; Elizabeth could not trust herself to speak of Willoughby to her mother, and she purposely sought occupation in the arrangements of the day; arrangements not confined to feed her own vanity, or exclusively to decorate the ball-room for her evening party; her poorer neighbours were not forgotten, she devoted the first hours of the morning to benevolent purposes; she gave employment to the young and healthy, and rewarded the industrious for proofs of their diligence.

Mr. Trelawny, a near neighbour, and intimate acquaintance of the family, was among the guests of the evening. He had paid Elizabeth more than usual attentions, but he was a man of the world, "grave or gay, lively or severe," as seemed to be most consonant to the taste of those with whom he associated; and

Miss Coventry, being the presiding star of the evening, was no small attraction, no small inducement for his distinguishing preference.

One part of his conversation became most interesting to her. He talked of Willoughby, endeavoured to excuse his errors; and then kindly added all that could soothe her uneasiness to account for his absence. When marking the sweet intelligence of her countenance, when lost in admiration of her elegant form, and enchanted by the simplicity of her manners, he thought she was the only woman he could ever marry, but not having sufficiently made up his mind to offer her his hand and heart, he again fell into the art of trifling, and set at nought some serious hints he had involuntarily given her of everlasting regard, and never-ending passion. The seeming interest with which at times they conversed, was not unobserved by Mrs. Coventry, and the next day, while amused by Elizabeth's describing some little perplexities of the evening, Mr. Trelawny's attentions were not forgotten. Elizabeth, ever candid and sincere, related all that had passed; and perhaps the maternal wish to see a daughter well settled in life, made

Mrs. Coventry indulge the hope that Trelawny had been more serious in his attentions.

Elizabeth suspecting her mother's mental reservations, coolly said, " Mr. Trelawny could never be the man of her choice." As time passed on, Mr. Trelawny became however more domesticated at Coventry lodge—fascinating in manners, elegant in person—a mind stored with intellectual knowledge, of a good family, and in the possession of a large unincumbered fortune, no reasonable objection could be alleged on the side of prudence to wish that his visits were less frequent; but although the rumour of the day had confirmed to many that he was the accepted lover of Elizabeth, Trelawny had been too cautious to commit himself in any way, should he waver in his newly-formed hopes and resolutions.

Thus temporizing, as it were, with his own conscience, by not openly avowing his partiality, by talking of friendship instead of love, and ungenerously endeavouring to gain her affections, without resolving on a fair and honourable conduct, Elizabeth had always considered Mr. Trelawny as an agreeable, intelligent companion: and as she saw that her father liked

his society, she continued to treat him with her accustomed unreserve; but sedulously avoided all opportunities of encouraging any particular attentions. She was on some points dissatisfied with his religious principles, nor would she have listened to a prince, if the same God which she worshipped was not the object of their mutual adoration.

Trelawny was soon caught in the snare which he heeded not to weave for another; he had defied danger, and fell a victim to his temerity. He became in the common acceptation of the word, so much in love with Elizabeth Coventry, that he determined without delay to offer her his hand and heart. Her discouragement of his pretensions he attributed to that inherent spirit of coquetry which he had so often laughed at and subdued in others, nor for a moment imagined that any woman could hesitate to receive his addresses, when unequivocally and honourably offered.

Who therefore can conceive his astonishment, that Miss Coventry was not tremblingly alive to the honour he meant to confer on her: that she did not sink with timidity, or stammer out a reference to her parents, when in all the rhapsody of passion he was addressing her as

an angel, as the guiding star of his future destiny! Who can paint his surprize when she appeared neither flattered nor elated, but with a good-humoured smile refused the titles he offered her, and avowed that she was too happy in the simplicity of her present character to wish to exchange it for any that existed in his imagination alone. He with gentle violence detained her—became more rational, and extorted the promise, that she would not immediately decide on so important a subject: but the conference ended unsatisfactorily to both parties.

In Trelawny's mind love and vanity were at variance. In Elizabeth's, the wish to please her parents, and the wish to forward her eternal interests in an union for life, were the predominant feelings. She considered marriage as an awful, an indissoluble engagement; that the more she became attached to a being whom next to God she should think it her duty to obey, with less resolution she might be enabled to subdue her failings, or her growing prejudices, if the man on whom her heart rested, instead of confirming her faith, directly or indirectly set it at nought, by either indifference, scepticism, or ignorance on religious subjects.

Mr. Coventry for worlds would not have urged her to marry an immoral man, but Mr. Trelawny, by well-timed silence, and an apparent deference to Mr. Coventry's opinions, had never given any cause for suspicion that he was not altogether a Christian; and so brilliant an establishment for Elizabeth was not to be relinquished without just grounds for its rejection. Once, when conversing with her parents on the subject, she said, "I will candidly allow that Mr. Trelawny's apparent attachment might lead to a more tender interest on my part than I at present feel for him. I do not expect to meet with a perfect character, but till I am convinced that his principles are untainted with modern scepticism, I cannot give him the encouragement you wish, and therefore as I do not think it is very honourable to hold any one in suspense, let me intreat you, my dearest father, to write him a decided refusal."

"I am not surprized, I am gratified with your caution," Mr. Coventry answered, "all I ask is, that you will take time; Mr. Trelawny himself requests it: desirable as it would be to see you so amply provided for,—lessened as is my power to give you, whilst I live, a fortune equal to my wishes, (alas! must I say it, even from

the extravagance of your brother!) not for the wealth of India would I urge you to marry the man you could not love."

"Then, my dear father, keep me still under your eye. Where shall I meet with such a home as this?—with such incentives to good?—with such an absence of all evil?—with ——"

Mrs. Coventry interrupted her, "These selfish considerations are unworthy of you—we were not placed in this world to remain for ever in a contracted circle. Where talents and opportunity are given, we should extend the practice of our duties, and if your heart is really free from any predilection for another, where could the circle of your duties be better extended than in an union with a man whose generosity seems to be as unbounded as his fortune?"

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Trelawny himself. The day being Sunday, he praised the preacher—talked of the gratifying decent appearance of all the neighbouring poor—that independent of religious motives, the appointment of the Sabbath was not only a political, but a general blessing—that for example sake he always went to Church, and having done so, he did not think

it requisite to be praying all the rest of the day. Elizabeth had left the room to prepare for the afternoon service, and returned equipped for the walk. Mrs. Coventry said, " We do not apologise, Mr. Trelawny, for thus turning you out." He bowed and accompanied them to the Church door. His horses were waiting at some little distance. " Pray for me, dear Miss Coventry, in this your work of supererogation—do not look grave, or I must take refuge in the sanctuary—it is in your power to make me all you wish—I really am half inclined to give up my engagement; but no, he added more seriously, I will act from principle. You would naturally attribute my going to Church this afternoon to my fear of your animadversion—from my soul I detest hypocrisy. When I am convinced (and I will give the subject fair play) that Religion commands it, I will be a constant attendant. In the mean time, loveliest of human beings, I repeat, pray for my conversion."

Elizabeth certainly did not place the perfection of Christianity in going to Church; she knew that religion must be seated in the heart, but she also knew that the safest path to gain that perfection to which we are allowed to as-

pire, was an unremitting observance of the ordinances of God. She could not reconcile it to her simple perception of right and wrong, why rank, fortune, health, and happiness, should render their possessors so peculiarly privileged, that the ceremonies and ordinances which God himself had sanctified, might be safely neglected by them, and the religion which the Gospel taught, abridged or altered, according to the suggestions of human reason.

There were moments when Trelawny's vanity was so much wounded at Miss Coventry's manner, that he was almost tempted to give up the contest, and withdraw his addresses. When absent, he made a thousand resolutions to this effect; when present, he discovered some new beauty in her mind or person, some acquirement he had hitherto disregarded, and the very coldness that wounded his pride, was often a powerful incentive to induce him to become master of her warmest affections.

Trelawny took the earliest opportunity to efface the impressions his Sunday afternoon's conversation might have left upon Elizabeth's mind. She allowed him credit for sincerity; and all he asked was, that she would take

time before she gave him her final answer. Ever accustomed to confide to her brother her little perplexities and pleasures, for in happier times he had been her counsellor, her guide, and her esteemed and beloved companion, she wrote to him with all the anxiety and affection which a sister could feel. She gently complained of his continued absence, of her heart-felt disappointment that any engagement should have prevented his being at home on a day it was once his joy to celebrate with all a brother's affection. She urged him to come without delay to give comfort to the best of fathers—to tranquillise the affectionate heart of a too anxious mother, and to delight by his presence a sister, who required, particularly required, his support and counsel. "Dearest Willoughby," she concluded, "however you may be engaged in business, in pleasure, or in the various avocations of a world you love too well, do not forget that you are a rational and an accountable being; rational, because you have the power to choose good or evil, and therefore accountable to God for all your actions. My dearest Willoughby, how often in times past have you observed to me that an immoderate pursuit of pleasure unfits the mind for any

thing that requires diligence and reflection; that continually agitated by the tumult of unworthy passions, it loses that acute perception of right and wrong, which as rational beings, but above all, as Christians, we are bound to retain unvitiated and pure. But I know not, I cannot positively know the reasons of your continued estrangement from home. I would not by ill-timed censure or unjust accusations wound your feelings, or induce you to accuse me of impatience and severity. It may be that your professional duties engross a large portion of your time, and that engaged in praise-worthy occupations, you know not the silent lapse of time, nor feel the thousand anxieties which we all feel in so long and tedious an absence.

" My father never utters a reproach, but he looks ill, and seems to have something on his mind. My mother, and your mother, Willoughby, trusts to the God of all mercies for your health and welfare: she is however thin and pale, and while she endeavours to make excuses for your neglect of us, and our letters, with pain I mark the deep drawn sigh from her bosom, and the trembling accents of her voice. As to myself, dearest brother, " I am weary of conjecture;" perplexed as I also feel on one

subject, your society would just now be of the greatest comfort. Your favourite Trelawny has made proposals of marriage. My father and mother are I think strangely pleased with the offer, but till my mind is satisfied on one point, I will not exchange the certain happiness of their dear society, for the uncertain prospect which is held out to me. I know you will answer, that I am an insensible girl, and that endeavouring so to guard my heart against the encroachment of love, I shall become fastidious, if not ridiculous; that I am not formed to feel the tender anxieties of passion, and that, in short, I shall live in single blessedness all my days. Perhaps I am not alarmed at the idea of this much dreaded " single blessedness"—perhaps I have not so insensible a heart as you have ever given me credit for: perhaps I think I am capable of feeling those sacred affections which should be inseparable from real love, and that were I convinced of a man's attachment founded on better principles than worldly interest, or the prepossession of features and complexion, that reason pointed the choice and religion confirmed it; I think I could give my whole heart to such a being, and whatever

were the changes of this mortal life, be happy in the hope of our eternal union.

"But enough, dearest Willoughby, say you will come soon to us once more, the companion of my walks, and we will take no retrospect of the past. My father has lately had a delightful letter from your friend Donavan. Why does he not as usual mention you? Your name is not in the letter. Again, and again, let me urge you to hasten here, where affection waits to welcome you.

"ELIZABETH COVENTRY."

CHAPTER II.

Willoughby had just made something like a determination to set out for Coventry lodge, when he received the above letter. He had not been insensible to the feelings of remorse that he had so long neglected that home, once the seat of all his happiness. He loved his family—he felt the liberality and indulgence of their conduct, and the early religious instructions he had received from his mother, sometimes gave a momentary check to the unsatisfactory career he was pursuing. But a blameable indecision of character, and the fear of this world's ridicule, too frequently frustrated the performance of good resolves, and set conscience and pleasure continually at variance. He was profuse, without any natural propensity to extravagance; and dissipated, without feeling gratified with a life of vanity and folly. When he gamed, it was more from the prevalence of example than the love of play; and when he drank, more from habit than inclination. He was irreligious without daring to adopt the

creed of the sceptic, and in the hour of illness or solitude, he reprobated the spell by which his senses seemed to be enslaved; and there were moments when he thought himself accountable to God for all his actions, and determined at some future day to stand firmly against the world's temptations. But he never considered that the present moment only he could call his own. "What will the world say?" was ever a momentous question, and when balancing between pleasure and duty, his newly formed resolutions rose lightly in the scale against the power of habit, and the fear of ridicule. During an extraordinary hour of serious meditation the above letter from his sister was given to him, and he instantly determined to set off for Coventry lodge. Before some necessary arrangements could be settled, and while he was re-perusing the letter, two gentlemen with whom he was particularly intimate were announced. They came to ask him to join a shooting party in Hertfordshire. He excused himself with firmness; one of them seeing the letter and the address in a lady's hand-writing, began in a strain of raillery to guess the reason of his refusal; his avowal that the letter was from Coventry lodge, gave a new direction to the persua-

sion and ridicule of his companions. The visit to Coventry lodge was again postponed, and a few lines were immediately written to his anxious and affectionate sister in the common place style of urgent business, deep regrets, and promises for the future.

Mr. Coventry's fortune was reputed to be a much larger one than he could in reality boast of. He was of a good and respectable family. In early life he had derived from a lucrative employment the wealth he was now enjoying, and had for some years past, invested it in the firm of a banking-house, which was generally considered as secure as the Bank itself. He had also some considerable property which he daily expected to be remitted to him by the sale of a West India estate, and thus, though he could command a handsome income, it was not always convenient to answer the extravagant demands of his son, and all the ready money he had been in possession of had been appropriated in paying many of Willoughby's debts.

Willoughby was professionally bred to the law; his natural good abilities and superior talents might have done honour to the calling; but he had made a far slower progress in his

studies than others with less brilliant capacities, but with perseverance and industry to crown their labours. Had Donavan, the friend of his early youth, been continually associated with him, incalculable had proved the advantage; they were at school and at college together, where the persevering spirit of Donavan, his strict adherence to the duties of religion, and his unshaken honour and rectitude of conduct in all worldly transactions, checked the volatile and unsteady disposition of his friend, and gained him the esteem of the good, and even the respect of the unprincipled. On their last visit at Coventry lodge Donavan was preparing for holy orders, and since that period, had taken possession of a small but desirable living. Till the above-mentioned visit, Donavan had not seen Elizabeth for two or three years; he had been accustomed to caress her as a beautiful child, and sportively to call her his little wife: and when on this meeting she received from him the respectful salutation, instead of the fraternal and affectionate embrace, she for a moment forgot the great change a few years must have made in her appearance; she for a moment accused him of unnecessary reserve, and only remembered the childish rap-

ture with which she used to greet the arrival of both her brothers.

Whatever were Donavan's sentiments, from that hour he behaved to her with great kindness and respect, but never by any indirect raillery or pointed attentions reminded her of their former intimacy, or sought to increase their habits of confidence. Elizabeth sometimes felt hurt without being able to assign any just or reasonable cause, she was however delighted with his society, and to note the wisdom (as she innocently termed it) which fell from his lips. Her conclusions were, that though as a little girl he might have been pleased with her questions and remarks, and amused with her playful disposition, as a young woman she did not interest him, and therefore feared to encourage what her inexperience might construe into partial admiration. She once thought she would never marry while he remained single, but reason and good sense soon conquered all romantic resolutions; and her useful studies, her more elegant recreations, and her works of charity left little leisure to ruminate on future visionary events, and self-created expectations. When perusing any of Donavan's letters, addressed to her father or brother, " How happy

the woman who engages his affections," was almost an involuntary exclamation; but, that love could ever exist without the conviction of a mutual partiality, never for a moment agitated her feelings; and certain now of Mr. Trelawny's unequivocal regard, she determined to commune strictly with her own heart, and abide by its decision. On one point she would endeavour to be satisfied before she was swayed by her father's persuasions—she would be convinced what were Trelawny's real sentiments on the subject of religion, and after a long and tender conversation with her parents, feeling that she could not allege any reasonable excuse for refusing a match in every way so apparently eligible, not even with truth could she profess a dislike either of Trelawny's person or manners, she determined to send him the following letter. On the preceding evening he had been more than usually urgent for her decision in his favour, in open and manly terms had declared she was the only woman in the world formed to insure to him the blessing of domestic happiness, that her coldness drove him to despair, while the beauties of her mind and person made him resolve never to relinquish the hope of interesting her affections, but with life

itself. Overpowered by his earnestness, she blamed herself for a timidity she could not conquer, yet felt that he evaded any thing like seriousness; and weighing the momentous balance of temporal and eternal happiness, she also felt how insecure the latter would probably prove were her heart's affections irrevocably engaged to a man only mindful of the former. Her letter therefore ran thus.

" Accustomed to consider you as a friend and companion with whom I have ever conversed without restraint on various and interesting subjects, why should the feelings of a deceptive timidity now conceal from you the doubts which agitate and disturb my mind? May I not, without meaning the shadow of a compliment, candidly acknowledge, that had I been prone to that sort of captivation which a pleasing exterior gives rise to, ere this you might have pleased my fancy, perhaps have interested my heart; but it has ever been my unalterable opinion, that love, without the most perfect esteem—that love, without a reciprocity of sentiment and opinion, can neither be sincere nor permanent. I am not now about to call you to an account for your principles or

opinions, but to ask you with all interest and seriousness what they really are? whether the frivolity with which you sometimes seem to treat the most serious subjects is real or affected. If you think rightly, you will not here stop in derision, and reprobate my questions, but you will appreciate the motives which give rise to the important inquiry. It is to me a very awful thought, Mr. Trelawny, that from the moment I become your wife, I am your's to all eternity! I shudder at the possibility of weakening that faith in Revelation, which it has been the business of my life to mark, to learn, to understand—of weakening it by the example and the principles of the man to whom I am eternally bound. I now, it is true, think such a fatal change impossible, but of this I am certain, with a heart naturally grateful and affectionate as mine is, I should ever lament in secret despair the errors and apostacy of a husband, to whom I had solemnly pledged my love, my reverence, and obedience.

"If you and I should ever come to a right understanding, you will be convinced that one Faith must sanction our religious opinions, one Hope animate our minds, one principle of Charity mark our actions, or not for the wealth of

worlds would I bind my future fate with your's. I therefore intreat you as a friend, I call upon you as a fellow being, I rely upon your honour to consider what I have said, and not to answer me in a light or trifling manner, but as you value your own peace and mine, to answer me with unfeigned sincerity. Call this an unmeaning rhapsody—term my earnestness the cant of methodism, the prejudice of bigotry—say I am aiming to be eccentric, and I have succeeded in becoming ridiculous, and I am unequivocally answered. But if I am dear enough to you to render the sacred feelings of my heart worth your attention, give me in return the whole transcript of your's. I can now bear with firmness your censure or your praise; but were I even only your affianced wife, vain regrets for any difference of opinions and sentiments might embitter the present hour, and give rise to much future disappointment. And had we pledged our vows at God's sacred altar, and worldly arrangements had been our only interest, what would you have said if I had then asked you the nature of your religion? It were indeed well if I had received a satisfactory answer, but what redress could I have had against a light or trifling one? against your want of can-

dour and of confidence? You are now free as air, no blame can be attached to your receding from your late proposals; no blame can be attached to me for urging you to speak the truth from your heart. You will probably again accuse me of coldness and indifference, but it will prove to me that you cannot comprehend the higher motives by which I am actuated; perhaps you will also accuse me of a melancholy foreboding spirit, of a mind tinctured with the delusions of enthusiasm, but while my own heart acquits me of either, while my unbroken spirits permit a full enjoyment of the innocent recreations of life, and I trust to the protection of the Author of all good for a continuance of his blessings; I think I shall be neither influenced by your unjust accusations, nor offended by your ridicule. But I hope better things of you, and on the candour and sincerity of your answer, to what I know you will term an extraordinary epistle, I fully rely.

"ELIZABETH COVENTRY."

"Extraordinary indeed," Mr. Trelawny exclaimed, as he impatiently perused Elizabeth's letter. "What cold hearted methodistical ideas! She is too sentimental for me." Then reading

the letter a second time, he said; "And a preaching wife who could bear? Why is she so gay, so lovely, so fascinating in her manners! so unlike all that is formal and severe! She may be right, but on my soul I believe this is an unrivalled composition, as an answer to a lover's proposal of marriage." He attempted to write, but soon tearing the paper, determined to see Elizabeth immediately, and in general terms to answer for his "faith, hope, and charity." The result of the meeting may be easily imagined, and both parties were mutually dissatisfied.

Willoughby was enjoying, we should rather say was appearing to enjoy, the gay hilarity of a convivial party; for just before he left London two letters had proved the cause of irremediable uneasiness; the one announced the loss of the vessel in which his father's property had been entrusted, the other contained a pressing demand for money from an impatient creditor, with threats that a harsher method would be resorted to, if the present application should be unsuccessful. The first letter gave him the most serious concern and heart-felt remorse. Mr. Coventry had requested him to have the expected property insured, and had

every reason to believe that the business was properly transacted; but from a blameable procrastination, it had either escaped Willoughby's memory, or ceased to appear of consequence to attend to. He at length determined to present himself at Coventry lodge, supplicate the forgiveness of his father, and exert every faculty of mind and body to retrieve his own credit and his father's loss.

Just at this period Trelawny was obliged to absent himself on very particular business in town, nor had he much advanced in Elizabeth's good opinion since their conference after her letter. She was frequently shocked at his ignorance on religious subjects, and had on the morning of his departure entreated her father to speak explicitly to him, and to decline his addresses without farther delay. She could not quite understand why her father was so anxious that she should be united to Trelawny; it never entered into her mind to suppose that the fear of another attachment was an ostensible reason. In the immediate neighbourhood there lived a gentleman, who wanting the recommendation of fortune, could not be a suitable match for Elizabeth Coventry, at least such was the opinion of her father, and the

apparent eligibility of Trelawny's addresses threw him still farther in the back ground; and although Frederick Vincent had never dared to breathe the sigh of love in the presence of so valued a family, nothing could erase the suspicion of his growing attachment to Elizabeth. She herself both esteemed and understood his character, but entertained not the most distant idea that she was regarded by him with more than friendly partiality. His attention to an aged grandfather, who seemed to live but in his presence; the very narrow income which contributed to the support of both; his superior taste for literature; his unremitting exertions for the good of others; ensured to him the esteem and friendship of Elizabeth, and ever induced her to pay him more than usual attention when in the company of those whom the world and custom termed his superiors. Until Mr. Coventry began to fear him as a dangerous rival with Trelawny, he had always been a welcome guest at the lodge, and the various opportunities he had enjoyed of Elizabeth's society, caused him to regard her as the most lovely and amiable of human beings. Nor was he in a very enviable state of mind when marking the lover-like attentions of a

man, with whom, unprejudiced by selfish motives, he was convinced could not make her happy; and the general report that his addresses had been accepted, too fatally discovered the secret passion he himself had unconsciously cherished. His own want of fortune he considered as an insurmountable bar to being permitted to gain her hand, and he romantically, we must not say reasonably, fancied, that had she met with a kindred soul, he could have witnessed the union not only with fortitude but joy. He had long observed the even tenour of her conduct under circumstances which would have proudly elated many a female mind; the cheerful gaiety of her temper, her strict adherence to every form of propriety, and, that though humble as the village maid, she was the kind friend and affectionate adviser of all who sought her counsel. He had also observed how unostentatiously she performed the practical and charitable duties of life, how consistent in her conduct, in her dress, and in all her actions. He was convinced that the strength of her mind proceeded from no unfeminine pretensions—that its foundation was religion, and that though she complied with the innocent customs of the world she never allowed them to

interfere with her Christian duties, and had often willingly relinquished selfish gratifications, rather than disappoint her poorer neighbours in some act or gift of benevolence. And as he had thus marked the beauties of a mind cultivated, not warped by education, unpresumingly adorned by every ornamental acquirement, he had also marked the loveliness of her face and form, and the beauty of a complexion which he had often with other poets and other lovers compared, and put in competition with all the roses and lilies of the universe. In a word, he enthusiastically worshipped the image which fate had proscribed him from loving. A thousand times he resolved to fly the danger he had almost unconsciously braved; but some little occurrence, some chance engagement, more secretly riveted the chain he had not the fortitude to break. And now considering her as the destined wife of another, he was still less anxious to avoid her society; his high sense of honour, whilst it enshrined her in all that was pure and lovely, completely destroyed those illusions which hope in spite of reason had momentarily encouraged.

Trelawny and Frederick Vincent were not upon terms of intimacy; the haughty conde-

scension of the one, and the calm dignity of the other could not assimilate, and yet there were moments when Trelawny was jealous even of the man he pretended to despise. Now, absent from Elizabeth, and reviewing her conduct, he at times thought it not only eccentric, but absurd, and he pictured to himself, that instead of being the envy of his friends by sporting his wife and his curricle together, he should become the object of their pity and ridicule from the preciseness of domestic arrangements, starched looking servants, and family prayers. Then he would console himself with the idea of letting her enjoy in the country all her extraordinary prejudices, and that London and liberty would ever be his own resource and privilege. She might however think it her duty to conform to the taste of her husband: she was new to the world—he never yet met with a woman insensible to admiration and popularity; and if love, rank, and riches could ensure them; Elizabeth Coventry as his wife would in an eminent degree be the reigning star of fashion. He would not permit himself to imagine that her indifference either to him or to the brilliant career before her was real; he attributed her self-command, her serious reasoning, her extraor-

dinary letter, to the confinement of her education, and little intercourse with the gay world; and was convinced, that when mixing more in society she would gladly relax those rules of precision in the distribution of time, and those eternal visits of charity which he could not bring himself to consider as necessary. He deemed it right and proper to give money to the poor, nor could he resist the supplication of distress, if it happened to meet his ear, but to be charitable on principle as well as on feeling, to make any exertion in behalf of a suffering fellow creature, or practise self-denial for the good of others, was not in the fashionable creed of the circle which he acknowledged. He considered that a casual act of charity would indemnify him for the daily extravagance of his habits; that the season of youth and health was the season of enjoyment; and that the great Creator was too merciful to take cognizance of those errors which were the result of passions he himself had implanted in the mind. He endeavoured to argue, he could not reason, but deceived himself into the belief that he was no worse than his neighbours, perhaps better than those who professed more than they practised, and were not consistent in the

general tenour of their actions. And thus, how often does a too partial examination of ourselves lead to a conviction of self-righteousness, rather than to an increase of that Christian humility which should be the grand foundation of religious faith and moral practice.

CHAPTER III.

But to return to Coventry lodge. Elizabeth's anxiety about her brother daily increased, she had charged Trelawny to see him, and to use the influence he possessed to induce an early visit at the lodge. Trelawny promised all she wished, but as Willoughby had left town, of course they never met, which gave a momentary concern to Trelawny, he being convinced that Willoughby would have been just at this crisis a powerful advocate in his favour. Willoughby had determined to see his parents, and without delay to begin the work of reformation. Alas! he had ever found it much easier to make resolutions for the future, than reduce them to immediate practice, and though he despised himself for infirmity of purpose and instability of mind, he had permitted conscience to increase a long account against him, without the power of examining it with an earnest and laudable scrutiny.

A few days before his arrival at the lodge, Elizabeth had been induced to accompany

some of her young friends to a beautiful rural cottage in order to visit an amiable and afflicted woman, and to partake of the simple refreshments she could offer them. The day turned out unusually warm, and after walking home in the mid-day sun, she very imprudently, not only drank a draught of iced water, but sat for some time heedless of a current of air which blew directly on her face. In the evening she complained of cold and shivering, and the next morning was unable to leave her bed. Rest and proper remedies soon rendered her convalescent. Yet in defiance of reason, she felt somewhat mortified to see a violent eruption in her face; imagining however it would prove but a temporary blemish, she endeavoured to suppress complaint, and to quiet her mother's anxiety: and in the midst of a good-humoured conversation on the subject, a loud ring at the outward gate announced the arrival of a stranger; Willoughby's well known step in the hall soon aroused their attention, and the next moment he entered the room—Mr. Coventry extended his hand, "Willoughby, you are ever welcome," was all he could articulate, but in a mother's and a sister's embrace he for a moment forgot his perplexities and errors. He invo-

luntarily started to see Elizabeth's complexion so altered, but being assured a few days would probably restore its clearness, he endeavoured to account for his long absence and apparent neglect of all his heart held dear.

"Willoughby," Mr. Coventry said, "actions, not words, are the criterion of a son's attachment; but I will not reproach you: here you are ever welcome, and alas, we have only to lament that the world has of late gained too decisive a victory over the simple attractions of a parent's roof." Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth said something conciliating and affectionate, and Willoughby thought he never could speak to his father of pecuniary entanglements, or acquaint him with the general loss of property from his own careless procrastination. He would write immediately on his return to town—urge the necessity of professional business in order to shorten his present painful visit, and throw himself entirely on his father's mercy for forgiveness. It was not in nature to embitter the present hour of meeting; he could not be an eye-witness of his mother's distress, whose expressive countenance too well confessed what passed in her bosom. It may well be imagined,

that notwithstanding every excuse and palliation which sophistry could invent, he was thoughtful and abstracted; and there were moments when he imagined, if all his difficulties were surmounted, that he could live for ever in the bosom of his family, and relinquish those vain and unprofitable pursuits which had so long enslaved his senses and paralized his exertions.

On the evening before he left the lodge, Mr. Coventry took up a newspaper, which, by having been mislaid, he had omitted to read before, and saw the account of the loss of the vessel which had contained his property. Marking the place with his finger, he said, "Here, Willoughby, is an unfortunate affair: I feel for those who have suffered by it; yet I cannot but truly rejoice that I was resolute in my opinion of having the property ensured. I have often told you I am not the rich man the world imagines me to be; and how this repeated avowal may operate on your future conduct, time only can determine. I intend soon to take a journey to London myself, to arrange money affairs and settle my fortune in the funds, which, from peculiar circumstances, you all know has hitherto been left in the firm to which I belonged; and

though I really think the house is as secure as the Bank itself, for reasons I cannot now explain, my resolution is unalterably fixed."

Had Mr. Coventry looked steadfastly at Willoughby, he would have discovered the painful conflict of his mind; but still regarding the paper, he continued to animadvert on the untoward event, and to give him every advice and direction how to proceed in the business. "Very extraordinary however," he added, "that through the channel of a newspaper we should be first apprized of it."—"Alas!" Willoughby thought, "my father has yet to learn more than I have courage to communicate." He heard his voice as proceeding in conjectures and resolutions, and mechanically promised to do all that was requisite in the business.

Elizabeth had marked his trepidation of manner and frequent changes of countenance, and determined to have some private conversation with him as soon as possible. She knew not what to fear; but that his uneasiness proceeded from his own imprudence and dissipated habits, she had little doubt of. When wishing good night, an unobserved whisper expressed her earnest entreaties to have a little conversation before they retired to rest; and as he was

to leave the lodge early in the morning, she waited for him in her dressing-room with no little degree of inquietude.

He soon sent a note, expressing that extreme fatigue had induced him to retire to rest, that he would write to her from town, and explain the reasons of his present uneasiness and abstraction of mind. This too true confirmation that there was indeed a cause, did not contribute to Elizabeth's usual repose; and hearing Willoughby very early in the morning walking up and down in the room over her own, she hastily dressed herself, and asked admittance at the door. He gently chid her for not being satisfied with his note; but immediately folded her to his bosom. She pointed to the bed, which had not been disturbed. He regained some degree of self-possession, and endeavoured to rally away her fears on his account. A summons that his horses were in readiness, and Willoughby declaring he should be too late for the business in question, checked the inquiries she came purposely to make. "My dearest brother, do not forget us," was all she could say; and clasping his hand, left within it all the money she was mistress of. His first impulse was decidedly to refuse it; but on recollecting that he could not

command a guinea, he burst into tears. A few moments' tender altercation ensued; and after repeating his promises of writing immediately on arriving in London, he quitted the house.

The morning was fair and beautiful, and the summer's breeze seemed to invigorate the whole face of nature; whilst the rising sun gilded with cheerfulness every abode of poverty, as well as those mansions where state and affluence resided. In the course of Willoughby's ride, how many were the resolutions he formed, no longer to sacrifice his time and talents to the service of that world which he internally despised; to seek from the counsel of a faithful, but of late neglected friend, the surest means to become master of himself. Apprehensions of his father's declining health, the tender regrets which his mother had expressed for the estrangement of an only son, the affectionate and considerate conduct of a beloved sister, all combined to increase the feelings of remorse, and to make him imagine himself the most wretched of human beings. Passing through a remote and almost desolate village, a scene of cottage poverty met his eye; and children crying for bread, a brutal husband, and a despairing wife, (to whom his humanity extended pecuniary assistance,) in-

creased the dread of examining his own conscience: and the sums of money which he had lavished away, through gaming and dissipated habits, seemed to rise up against him in tremendous judgment, to add to the distressing account which must ere long be strictly investigated. When he arrived in town he was afraid to appear abroad, lest he should receive an unwelcome salutation from any of his creditors; and the unseasonable suppositions and jests of his intimate companions were not calculated to tranquillize his spirits.

Disgusted with the world, more and more dispirited by a closer review of his own conduct, and convinced that some decisive measure must be adopted to acquaint his father with the loss of his property, he began a letter to Elizabeth; but indecision procrastinated its conclusion. He thought it more advisable to write first to Donavan, to entreat his presence, and to meet with him all the deserved reproaches of his injured family. Happy had it been for Willoughby, if, in the moments of heartfelt contrition, he had confessed his frailties to such a friend. Alas! of how little avail is the confession of faults, and the temporary abhorrence of our evil ways, if they lead not to that renewal of the mind to

holiness,—that renunciation of sin,—that victory over our corrupt natures, which is only to be accomplished by the assistance of Divine Grace aiding our own earnest endeavours, and not by the transient feelings of remorse, or a presumptuous dependence on our strength of mind and self-righteous intentions.

Willoughby had assured and promised the principal part of his creditors, that in a very short time all things should be settled, giving them to understand he only waited to see his father in town in order to arrange his affairs. Mr. Coventry's honourable character and reputed large fortune silenced their importunity. Willoughby recovered from bodily fatigue, at a distance from those objects which had so lately excited the better feelings of his heart, enjoying a momentary security from the horrors of a prison, wrote to Elizabeth in general but affectionate terms, with the promise of another visit in a very few days, when he should be better able to explain the apparent mystery of his conduct. He then guarded all letters of business from being sent to the lodge, and by a fatal procrastination increased his guilt and misery. Determined to enjoy a short reprieve from the remorse of an accusing conscience, he sought

relief by joining in the usual haunts of dissipation, or in those convivial parties where neither the feast of reason nor the flow of soul predominated; and was thence too fatally led to wreck his future peace on the throw of a die or the turn of a card. In calm and sullen despair, he was obliged to take up money on hard but too usual terms; for the honourable debt he had just contracted could brook no delay in the payment. All description must fail of the state of his mind and feelings. Again he thought of going to Donavan: but how could he meet the eye of such a friend—a friend so long neglected, for a career not only unsatisfactory, but disreputable? He knew that Donavan was indulgent, as it became the servant of the Master whose minister he was, to the first repented errors of indiscretion or folly; but he also knew that perseverance in evil habits, a determined course of life in opposition to the best propensities of our nature, and a weak indecision of character through the fear of this world's ridicule, would receive from him every deserved reprobation; and he at that moment thought that the contempt of such a friend was the severest trial that could await him. While these reflections were rapidly passing in his mind, it may well be

imagined that the receipt of the following letter did not add to its serenity. It was from his friend Donavan.

" Am I to judge by your continued silence, my dear friend, that your time is wholly engrossed by the pursuits of literature, and the prosecution of those studies incidental to your profession? that the midnight lamp and the early dawn are alike witnesses of your progressive acquirements and knowledge, and that you will eventually burst upon us common mortals in all the radiance of genius and of science? But to be serious, Willoughby; I anticipate much gratification at our next meeting, when we may compare our present pursuits, expectations, and views of life, with those which formerly interested our feelings. We have often talked of " rural quiet, ease, and alternate labour, progressive virtue and approving Heaven;" and whilst I have realized some scenes which then only existed in our imagination, you have been placed in the more perilous path—within the reach of erroneous example, and surrounded by all the temptations of a seductive and dissipated world. Stability of mind and principle can scarcely be duly estimated till they have been in

some degree tried by the casual events of life—till theory reduced to practice convinces us what is the real strength of our minds; and I cannot help thinking that they who stand firmly in the path of rectitude, amidst frivolous or dishonourable temptations, are not only more shining lights, and more praiseworthy examples, than the secluded misanthropist, but are more usefully and honourably filling the stations which God in his wisdom has appointed them. Your talents, my dear Willoughby, almost decide in your favour, that you will hereafter become an ornament to the profession you have chosen; and of the goodness of your heart, and the rectitude of your principles, I have not the shadow of a doubt. Your inestimable father could never survive the misery of a son's loss of honour and respectability: in a word, I think the peace of both your parents is bound up in the happiness and welfare of their children; and I myself have often been tempted to envy you the blessing of such a friend and sister as your's is, whose gentle counsels, in our very juvenile years, have sometimes given stability to our resolutions and pursuits. But you must come to me, Willoughby, and we will talk over all that is dear to us; and I am persuaded you can satisfac-

torily account for this chasm in our friendly intercourse. I have lately met with an unpleasant accident from a strained ancle, which will probably confine me to the house for some time. However, here I am, Coventry, confined to my study, and lying on the bed or sofa all the day; and as I trust you are disposed to perform a charitable act, you will doubtless, unless prevented by professional duties, immediately indulge me with your society. I promise not to confine either your body or your mind: books, neighbours, (some of the latter good and rational people,) joined to the striking contrast of my humble parsonage with the splendid mansions and scenes of gaiety to which you have been accustomed, may not be wholly without their interest; and, at the same time, change of scene and air may prove beneficial to your health, at this glorious and genial season.

"You have of late been very remiss in acknowledging my letters; but I must imagine you have received those which gave you an account of my present improved situation, of my daily habits, of my house, garden, land, and of the people with whom I sometimes associate. I told you how much I had to encounter and to endeavour

to reform, from the latitude of principle which seemed to pervade the higher ranks, and from the ignorance of the lower orders. I was termed by the former methodistical, and by the latter unnecessarily severe. And why? Because I had no taste for the noisy revels of intemperate mirth—for the pleasures of the chace; at least, because I did not consider country sports as the grand business of life; because I would not gamble with the more refined, and give up my time to the trifling and dissipated. The advanced age and infirmities of my predecessor had probably precluded that necessary exertion, in a country village, of administering to the spiritual wants of the poor; of attending accurately to their blameable or praiseworthy conduct; of noticing their regular or irregular attendance at church, and endeavouring to promote the habits of sobriety and honesty in all their ways. I have at last established a school on the Madras system, and have the happiness to find the most satisfactory consequences from the institution. I painfully mark my own deficiencies, and see the goal of perfection to which we are permitted to aspire only in perspective before me; and confess, that very painful have been my struggles to

render literary pursuits and occupations subordinate to the more active and useful duties of my profession.

" It is a worldly and common place observation, that we, of the sacred ministry, are but men, fallible beings, and liable to be led astray by our prejudices and our passions. Reason and experience cannot contradict the assertion: but are we thence either to increase the corruption of our nature, by tamely yielding to the surrounding contagion, by preaching what we do not follow; when the study of theology, which it should be the business of our lives to prosecute, forcibly inculcates the practice of self-denial, of moderation, and of temperance; of living for the good of others, amidst a perverse and crooked generation?

" To any one but yourself, Willoughby, some apology might be necessary for the desultory epistles you generally receive from me; but many delightful associations arise in my mind, when addressing the friend of my early youth, bidding defiance to all precision of style, convinced that either gay or grave, the language of the heart is by you best understood and appreciated. How often does faithful memory retrace the time when we, ' taking sweet counsel

together,' have indulged in the discussion of various and interesting subjects; and with honest exultation have marked, that the coincidence of sacred events, narrated by cotemporary writers, gave stability to our faith, and rewarded our researches after heavenly truths! I believe you sometimes thought me too serious; but I always gave you credit for a rightly turned mind, and a heart impressed with all that was just and honourable. May you, Willoughby, never lose the remembrance of such feelings; and may you pass the ordeal of worldly temptations with an unwounded conscience; for it is a common, but a very true assertion, that the misery we bring on ourselves by our own misconduct is alone insupportable. When the husband, the father, and the son, impose misery on the objects they are bound to revere and protect; when the prodigal seeks in dissipation and riotous living the verge of destruction, and has not the resolution ' to arise and to go to his Father;' when they, who have despised the long-suffering and forbearance of a merciful God, meet with the trials of life, the loss of fortune, of health, or of friends; when conscience, though she has seemed to sleep, arouses them to self-inflicted misery—where is the mind that can

bear up with fortitude, or fail to be convinced, that the prospect of eternity is only the beginning of sorrow?

" I write at intervals: it beguiles the hours of my confinement to the sofa; and some days have elapsed, from necessary pen employment, since I held it in your service. Let me repeat, Willoughby, hasten hither as soon as possible. When I do regain my liberty, I hope to convince you, that even at this distance from London, we do not merely vegetate away our time, but endeavour to live in rationality and comfort.

" There certainly was a time when, ' giving fancy's neck the reins,' I had pictured to myself, as the first of all earthly blessings, the heart and affection of a beloved and amiable companion, whose smiles would not only reward me for all the labours of my profession, but whose mind could assimilate with me in various and useful pursuits, and in the belief of those celestial truths, which, while they contributed to enlighten our earthly views, would prove the means of fitting us for a higher state of existence. I once was deceived to think I knew such a being!

" But away with this subject. The witchery of beauty, and the fair promise of mental excel-

lence, have for ever lost their power; and I plead guilty to your former accusation, of a very fastidious spirit in regard to the stability of woman's mind. I have, it is true, lately met with some young and lovely females, my very near neighbours, who, in the common acceptation of the term, may be called amiable and accomplished; but, were my heart permitted to make its decisive election, I should probably be induced to pause and hesitate; and, at the risk of being universally condemned, to say, 'Yet lackest thou one thing'—consistency of conduct! When I observe that the love of dress, the display of every shewy accomplishment, the love of admiration and of the world's applause, even for the common offices of humanity; the love of self, and the love of a good establishment, are the worshipped advantages of youth and beauty—when I see that riches and worldly honours are more considered by the parent than the mind and religious principles of the lover, and mark the management of many a mistaken mother to forward some interested view—had I a heart at ease, I should probably shrink from the possibility of mistaking a blank for a prize in the lottery of marriage.

"I think I shall never marry; but of this I am

certain, that with an ignorant woman I could not associate, and a trifling one I should despise! The time has been, that in some visionary moments I had determined that the wife I would choose must neither be the slave of prejudice nor fashion, but a reasonable companion and an affectionate friend; in prosperity, not puffed up; in adversity, my refuge and indulgent counsellor—with a mind enlightened by religion, one faith to guide our actions, one rule of practice to influence our lives. Thus guarded from visionary ills, had suffering and real affliction assailed her, all that the tenderness of affection could devise should have alleviated sorrow, whilst, in the spirit of fortitude and patience, we should have borne together the changes and apparent chances of life.

"What a subject have I been led into! But perhaps this is no ideal portrait of what I once thought perfection in woman! It is a hard and trying task to forget the waywardness of a beloved object.

"Willoughby, I am convinced, from various circumstances, it is your father's earnest hope that you will settle in life early, and give to him a daughter worthy of his family. The happiness which he himself has experienced in the

married state, and his early union with your amiable mother, naturally encourage the wish that your choice may be equally fortunate.

" I suppose you are as often as possible at the lodge. There cannot be a more welcome guest at a father's board, than a duteous affectionate son; and such a father as yours, Coventry, well merits even those supernumerary attentions which the gay and inconsiderate do not always make it convenient to offer. These reflections have arisen from some natural but unavailing regrets, that I was suddenly deprived of the affectionate care of my parents. Left so early an orphan, there is something sacred to me in the very name of father; and often, when we were boys together, passing our holidays at Coventry lodge, indefinable emotions agitated my mind, whenever you received the paternal benediction.

" I was interrupted just as I was about to close this volume, by the servant announcing Sir James Osborn, one of my most distant neighbours. The following edifying dialogue will not perhaps cause you to regard him as one of the most interesting or rational; but it might prove a warning to many, by exciting the feelings of pity and disgust for such a character.

" In a boisterous manner, his first salutation

was, 'What! still tied by the leg, Doctor? I should swear all day, and complain all night.'

" I smiled, and asked 'if impatience could amend the evil?'

" ' Cursed hard though. I ask your pardon. I was nearly swearing out right.'

" ' Why any ceremony with me, Sir James, when you use so little towards Him who has enjoined us to swear not at all?'

" ' I never thought of that before;' he returned; ' and the odds are, I shall never think of it again, unless reminded by the sight of your cushions. Some years hence, I hope to become a sober steady fellow; but (swearing again) health, strength, and fortune, were not given us but to enjoy them.'

" ' Very true, Sir James; particularly as I suppose you also enjoy the peculiar privilege of being exempted from accident or sickness.'

" ' You are a strange fellow, Donavan: you give serious ideas with such an open cheerful countenance, that, (I had nearly breathed an oath again,) upon my soul, I am inclined to believe there really is an honest parson or two in the world. You certainly act in character, when you endeavour to alarm us by the terrors

of the Lord, &c. &c. &c.; but suppose now, when we die we sleep for ever? What then? Of what avail would be all your preaching, and all the morality in the world? Where would be the objection to follow wherever pleasure leads, if body and soul perish together? I will bet you one of my best hunters against all your tedious sermons, that——'

" ' Hold, Sir James,' I interrupted, ' these are sentiments, to speak in your own dialect, you must not sport in my presence, unless you would allow me at some future opportunity to endeavour to controvert them.'

" He then, swearing an oath, expressed his detestation of all controversy, that he did not see but he was as good as his neighbours, and exposed his presumption and ignorance together.

" I told him I could not compliment him, on either speaking or acting in character; that he had more than once made an assertion ' on his soul,' which in another breath he had affirmed, was only an ideal conception; that the careless security with which he braved the dangers of the chace, might induce an indifferent observer to believe that he considered his state of exist-

ence in this world at least an immortal one; and that he never could be liable to the casual accidents of the field.

" He burst into a loud laugh, ' That's a good one faith, you walking on plain ground nearly lamed yourself for life, and I, who almost live on my hunter's back, never yet met with an accident. Where, my good fellow, was the providence it is your trade to preach about when—'

" ' Sir James Osborn, allow me again to repeat—'

" ' No, no! (he vociferated) no repetitions Doctor: have patience with me.' And unceremoniously trying his whip, he shook me heartily by the hand, and literally scampered down stairs.

" I will have patience, Willoughby. But this is a being who probably might have been formed by education rational and estimable. Sir James Osborn was at an early period of life the uncontrolled master of a very large fortune. He had been indulged in every fancy by an idolizing mother, and provided he grew in health and strength, she never felt any anxiety for the culture of his mind. To ride and to drive well soon became his only ambi-

tion, and the farce of having a mercenary tutor was very successfully played as he advanced in years. I am convinced that what he now calls prosing, will neither instruct nor reform him; his presumption, ignorance, and folly, must not for a moment be tolerated; but if patience and kindness can bring him to some degree of reflection, I will not by severity or impatience increase a still further disgust for whatever is good and serious. How varied is the page which gives to us the perusal of men and manners! how much we may gain by its warnings! how much we may learn by its examples!

"Although the chace and the bottle seem to be the only end of Sir James Osborn's existence, I am happy to acknowledge the acquaintance of many estimable persons who are more respected for their talents and virtue, than for the rank and riches which they hold in the world. At this moment you will probably think with me, that society and company are not synonymous blessings; and perhaps that there should be a reasonable termination even of a letter from a sincere and faithful friend.

"DONAVAN."

CHAPTER IV.

It is not possible to trace the varied emotions of Coventry's mind during his perusal of the above letter: he drew the disgraceful parallel betwixt himself and his friend, and shame and remorse were at first his own predominant feelings. Then temporizing with his conscience, he compared even the most faulty part of his own character with that of others with whom he had associated. He himself had been no deliberate seducer—he had never avowed the creed of infidelity—he had often attended to the supplication of distress if thrown by chance within its hearing, nor had he ever deliberately wronged the friend or companion who had trusted to his honour. The word honour again electrified his feelings. He thought of the long list of creditors, who depending on their own exertions for bread, must be reduced to poverty and distress, when he with their other employers were increasing debts without the probability of an honourable payment. He read the letter again, and a retrospect of his

late conduct faded into insignificance and folly. He would immediately go to Donavan; he would lay open his whole heart to him, and be guided only by his wise and deliberate counsel. As the beginning of punishment he would bear with meekness the reproofs he deserved. He mused on that part of the letter where Donavan speaks of a former attachment; he had always wished him to regard Elizabeth with partiality, and now the mystery was unravelled why their early friendship had not ripened into love, and Willoughby felt more solicitous than he had even expressed to her, that she should accept the addresses of Trelawny. He thought she was too fastidious, and well as he loved her, he pronounced that she would refine away her own happiness if she expected perfection in the man she would choose for a husband. He was at length aroused from reflection and reveries painful as they were useless, by a too truly testified report, that the banking-house which contained all his father's property, had failed during the few days he had secluded himself on account of the threats of his creditors. And here it should be mentioned, that fearing to trust to their patience he had at that time changed his apartments.

The hour of desperation seemed now to be arrived; his intention of going to Donavan was instantly exchanged for that of braving at Coventry lodge all the misery that awaited him. He would court the reproaches of his father; he would once more hold in his arms an adored mother and sister, and then—

His mind was too highly wrought by its contending emotions to give method to any future plans or resolutions—existence was a burden, and he lamented with redoubled bitterness his own extravagance, and the neglect of parents, so entitled to his heart's warmest affections and solicitude. He also lamented Donavan's total incapacity to meet him at the lodge, and simply wrote a brief account of the too well authenticated report, and of his own intention of immediately going to his father.

He could not meet with Trelawny, on whose professions of friendship he placed great dependence, nor did he suppose for a moment that any change in Mr. Coventry's circumstances would lessen an attachment to Elizabeth, founded, as he supposed, on the most disinterested motives. But Trelawny had left town, and had seen Miss Coventry, the result of which meeting must here be briefly narrated.

Elate with hope, and determined not to relinquish the hand of one who in spite of absence and reflection, he fancied he passionately loved; whose eccentricities he again attributed to a confined intercourse with the world, he resolved to come at once to a right understanding, to promise all that she should require, and to overcome her scruples by the eloquence of disinterested love. The eruption in her face still continued, and she had met the start of surprise, and the condolence of many with tolerable fortitude and composure. Vincent had neither insulted her by commiseration, nor complimented her at the expence of his sincerity, but he once impressively said, when sportively describing the notice she should attract, were she to brave the public eye? "Are there none ever amiable, Miss Coventry, who can value the gem beyond the casket in which it is enshrined? Are there none who can feel the radiance of a mind, which no outward circumstance can ever lessen or obscure?"

Trelawny had also formerly talked of the superiority of mind, of the fascinating charms of genius and of intellect; and doubtless, while gazing on Elizabeth's perfect features, animated by a complexion seldom surpassed in delicacy

and bloom, he estimated his own candour, and applauded his superior and enlightened taste.

Elizabeth received him in her mother's presence. "My dear Miss Coventry, how have I anticipated the delight of this moment!" but falling back a few paces, he involuntarily uttered an exclamation of surprize. It was not in nature to remain unhurt or unmoved at his expression and manner. Elizabeth soon recovered herself, and drawing a veil over her face, cheerfully requested her mother to explain the cause of so unfortunate an alteration. Trelawny faltered out unmeaning professions, but he was too passionate an admirer of beauty to declare, "that it was not a set of features or complexion, the tincture of a skin that he admired;" he hoped—he believed—he was certain, a short time would restore Miss Coventry's beauty, that the surprize of the moment had alone been the cause of his exclamation. After some time he took his leave, adding, "he should be miserable till he had the happiness of seeing her again." Elizabeth neither commented nor dwelt on Trelawny's behaviour, only requested Mrs. Coventry to give a very exact account of all that had just passed to her father. And on retiring to commune with her own heart, she could

claim no merit for receiving with composure a confirmation of Trelawny's shallow pretensions of regard. "Had I truly loved him, how differently should I now feel, and whence, but from indifference, does a weight seem to be removed from my mind, that I do not think myself called upon to yield to the wishes of my parents? Oh! had I truly loved him, instead of rejoicing at my freedom, I should endeavour to excuse his manner by all the sophistry of self partiality; that time might remove the defect, and that time might again re-instate me in my power over Trelawny's heart. Had I been his wife, what wretchedness would have equalled mine? She sought both her parents, and explained to them every feeling which could tranquillize their mind on her account.

CHAPTER V.

In a few days the intelligence of the failure of the banking-house reached Coventry lodge. Just before the account arrived, Mr. Coventry was good-humouredly suffering Elizabeth's exultation, from an extraordinary victory she had gained over him at chess. He had complained of indisposition all the day, and she had much pleasure to see that the game had interested him, and in some degree diverted away the pain and oppression of his chest. He was telling her that she and her mother should accompany him to London, in order to take the best medical advice for the continued redness on her skin, and that if the sea side should be recommended, they would pass the ensuing autumn at Brighton.

A letter was given by the servant to Mr. Coventry: he read a few lines, and fell back in the chair; he had firmly grasped the paper, still he recovered not. Medical assistance was sent for, and the opening of a vein relieved him. Mrs. Coventry now earnestly desired to

know the contents of the letter: for some time he resisted as well as he could all their entreaties, at length he gave the paper to Elizabeth, saying, " Be prepared, my dearest child, for the unfortunate contents, and break the news as gently as possible to that dear woman." Elizabeth, hastily reading the letter said, " My beloved mother, cannot we bear any trial when we are permitted to bear it together?"

" In mercy tell me its extent," Mrs. Coventry replied, " something fatal has happened to your brother. Is he well? or how shall I speak the words, perhaps he is taken from us."

" Not so, dearest mother, my father has lost a large sum of money."

He wildly faltered out, " We are beggars."

Mrs. Coventry took the letter, and though instantly comprehending there was too much truth in the assertion, felt comparatively relieved that nothing fatal had happened to Willoughby.

Mr. Coventry faintly said, " But where is my son? Can he be ignorant of our misfortune? Heaven is all wise and just in its dispensations. May the sight of a parent hastened by sorrow to the grave, restore Willoughby to himself and to his family!"

" My father," Elizabeth replied, " that fortitude which has hitherto supported you through life, will I trust be yet vouchsafed at this trying hour. All may yet be well!"

He would have clasped her to his bosom, but instantly complained of increased indisposition, and after vainly attempting to write a letter to town, he was persuaded to go to bed. On the following morning he had another fit, more lasting and alarming than the first, and the medical man was compelled to pronounce, that in all probability a third attack would prove fatal. Mrs. Coventry now thought not of the loss of fortune, the apparent danger of a husband so beloved, so endeared by a long series of tender happiness, was her only distress. Grief like her's could not evaporate in words, nor unavailing complaints. She neither wept nor accused heaven of severity, but whilst she shared with Elizabeth the painful task of watching his altered countenance, and offering what little relief could be administered, she bowed in submission to that God, in whose power alone are " the issues of life and death."

A third attack too fatally forbade all hope of Mr. Coventry's recovery. Willoughby still was absent. A few hours before he became insen-

sible, he attempted to say something to Mrs. Coventry. Elizabeth saw the motion of his lips, and putting her face close to him, he very inarticulately said, "My son, the property which is insured—comfort your mother—we shall meet again. Elizabeth, my child, we part not for ever."

He then lifted up, as well as he could, his hands and eyes to heaven, as if supplicating the God he had ever served, to bless and protect the objects before him. His eyes closed—he spoke no more; and after a few hours of total insensibility, he expired without a struggle or a sigh.

To those who have witnessed the "last silence of a friend," it is needless to paint in mournful colours the awful solemnity of such an hour, and they who have fearfully turned away from the house of mourning, or have never themselves experienced the height of human affliction, would probably be neither interested nor softened by any description of widowed grief or filial distress.

Mrs. Coventry for some hours could scarcely be aroused from the stupor which had seized her, and when Elizabeth had succeeded in restoring her senses, she wrote to Willoughby, and feeling that exertion was on her part abso-

lutely necessary, she wrote, and said, and did all that she thought requisite, even wondering at her own resolution. The bell at the outward gate rang violently. "Oh! that it could be my brother, he must ere this have received the express; but I think it is Mr. Trelawny's impatient ring."

In a few moments Willoughby was ascending the stairs. He rushed into the room, and folded both the objects before him in his arms. Pale and haggard in countenance, agitated and incoherent, he endeavoured to thank them for receiving so unworthy a being without one reproach. "Dear, dear mother, for thy sake, for Elizabeth's, the loss of fortune is ——but my father, oh! my father! how can I meet him —prepare him, dear Elizabeth, for the sight of me; I merit his severity—his kindness! oh! it would stab me to the heart!" Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth could not for some time interrupt him; they neither wept nor moved, and seemed almost unconsciously to regard his vehemence, which Willoughby, attributed to the meekness of a resigned and patient spirit, and again mentioned his father. Mrs. Coventry, overcome by a variety of contending emotions,

fainted; and whilst necessary restoratives were administering, Willoughby wildly exclaimed, I have killed my mother, and was rushing out of the room. Elizabeth, with great presence of mind, caught his arm, and said, "It were vain to conceal from you, my dearest Willoughby, the fatal truth, not the loss of fortune alone could have thus afflicted us. Our beloved father is removed from all worldly trials."

"Removed, Elizabeth! In mercy be explicit; removed! yet say not he is dead, or annihilate my existence."

"Be more composed—look at your mother and learn to be resigned:" here Elizabeth burst into tears, and Mrs. Coventry recovering her recollection, Willoughby fell on his knees before her, and wrapping her robe about his face, he remained for a few moments in sad and mournful silence. He then looked up at his mother, and said, "This is indeed the day of retribution. The best of fathers! and is he gone for ever? Heaven be my witness how I have loved him! Yes, amidst my follies, my vices, my apparent neglect of his dear and wholesome counsels, I have revered and loved him. Say, there is pardon for a son's ingratitude."

" Dear Willoughby," Elizabeth interrupted, " see your mother sinking under her affliction, and would you add to her distress?"

" Too surely I shall do so, and the thought unmans me."

He pressed his hand upon his burning forehead. " Lead me to my father's cold remains; but no, I cannot enter the dreaded chamber—this is the cowardice of guilt. And for what have I neglected such a father! On heaven's wide globe there lives not such a wretch as I am!"

Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth endeavoured to soothe his agitated feelings, and after a long and painful conversation, after many vehement but useless self accusations, Willoughby was persuaded to retire to his chamber, having first learnt of Mrs. Mansel, the valuable housekeeper, the particulars of his father's illness and dissolution.

The second meeting of this mournful party may be better imagined than described. When Elizabeth was alone with her brother, she endeavoured to give him the consolation of knowing that Mr. Coventry had mentioned him in his latest moments, and had spoken of the property which was insured for their mutual

benefit, adding, " she was persuaded that the loss of the rest of their fortune would now be only a secondary consideration both to herself and to her mother."

" To conceal any thing from you Elizabeth is now impracticable! We have not a shilling in the world, the property has never been insured, and a prison opens on my steps wherever I turn. I have contracted debts which I have not the remotest hope of discharging; even should I be traced hither, I must be torn from this scene of affliction; and how would my mother survive the disgrace of her son?"

A faint sickness ran through Elizabeth's agitated frame, but regaining her self-possession, she said, " Remember, Willoughby, our dear mother is a Christian."

" Volumes are indeed spoken in that sentence, Elizabeth. What but guilt unstrings my nerves, and forbids my entering into that room which contains the hallowed remains of the best of fathers! You are innocent, and therefore fearless; you have wept over them the tears of peace, because they are the tears of duty and affection."

Elizabeth asked if he would send again to Mr. Trelawny or to Mr. Vincent?

"Hide me from every human eye," was his repeated answer. Then rising, as if in the agony of desperation, he rushed out of the room, and immediately sought the chamber of death. There he remained for some hours, nor would he permit any witness of the heart-felt anguish he endured.

In a short time all parties became apparently more composed—despair gave rise to a sort of tranquillity in Willoughby's manner, which somewhat relieved Mrs. Coventry's mind from dreadful but vague apprehensions on his account. Elizabeth, watching every turn of her mother's countenance, exerted herself with fortitude, and in the hours of silence and seclusion, poured out her soul in sorrow to that God and Saviour, who hath promised consolation and relief to the weary and afflicted.

Mrs. Coventry once said, after endeavouring to appear more than usually composed, "Willoughby, you will now become our support, our adviser, and our friend. My only consolation is, that your dear father is removed from a scene of comparative poverty, his last worldly thoughts were for us, and that some part of our property was secured, gave him consolation in his latest moments. In losing him I have lost all

worldly happiness; and the deprivation of the luxuries of life will be no source of regret, whilst I have the society and kind attentions of my children."

Elizabeth, afraid to look at her brother, dubious whether at that moment to tell Mrs. Coventry the extent of their pecuniary losses, sat for some time in mournful silence. Willoughby wept like a child, and whispered to Elizabeth, "Oh! in mercy let my mother yet remain ignorant that we are reduced to absolute beggary!" and from the arrangement of some necessary business the communication was deferred. A new and different scene of distress on the day of the funeral too suddenly broke the intelligence to Mrs. Coventry. One of Willoughby's creditors traced him to Coventry lodge. At such an hour the appearance of strangers, their resolute defiance of the threats or persuasions of the servants soon bespoke their errand. Mr. Vincent, who was in the house, in preparation to attend the funeral, comprehended the nature of the business. Coventry only entreated they would suspend their power till the following day; he knew not what he said; he raved and supplicated by turns, now vainly wishing that his mother had known

the worst. Broken promises and a starving family made the creditor resolute. Willoughby was promising in sullen despair to accompany them on the moment after the funeral. Mr. Vincent, touched by the scene before him, paid the money, though assured by Willoughby and Elizabeth of their utter incapacity to discharge the debt to him. To assist a fallen friend from the resources of an affluent fortune, where no self-denial can ensue, where hard earned bodily labour, or the more refined species of mental exertion, has never been the means of accumulating wealth, is often not only applauded by an indiscriminating world, but also by the satisfied conscience of the author of any generous deed. All indeed too generally forget the humiliating truth, that we are but unprofitable servants, and that the motive, not the brilliancy of our actions will be estimated by the Almighty. Mr. Vincent had been successful in literary publications; the money which he had paid, was exclusively his own: some instances of self-denial might be the consequence of advancing it, but could not affect the comfort and enjoyment of the venerable parent with whom he resided.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW days after the funeral, Mrs. Coventry gained resolution to question Willoughby more particularly on the subject of his affairs. Shocked as she was to find the little expected pittance lost to them for ever, and by her son's careless conduct, she considered this was not the season for reproach, and in answer to his despair and self-accusations, she replied, "Sunk as my heart is in the depth of sorrow, shall I add to the bitterness of your feelings, Willoughby, by ill-timed reproaches? A penitent child, sensible of his errors, may securely rest on the bosom of maternal affection. I had lost my son—I have found him, and may heaven sanctify this trying affliction to our eternal welfare and happiness."

"Oh! my mother," Coventry replied, "your early instructions are not totally obliterated: there spoke the parent and the Christian. Henceforth I will indeed be unto you a son, day and night shall witness my exertions to procure for you the comforts of life."

He then imprecated the vengeance of heaven

on his head, if he ever relaxed in those duties which were now so indispensable for him to perform, and putting Elizabeth's hand within his mother's repeated every solemn protestation. He spoke of Donavan, gave them his last letter to peruse, and determined to write to him immediately, and acquaint him without reserve of their future melancholy prospects.

Painful as was the task to retrench expences, to discharge servants, and to prepare for their departure from Coventry lodge, such arrangements were promptly decided on; and, though every day brought with it some new trial, and some natural but vain regret, the loss of a beloved husband and father seemed to make all other deprivations of little moment, nor did Elizabeth indulge in painful reflections on the past, nor dreary anticipations of the future. She forgot not that the present was to prove the hour of exertion, and, that though her duties would be more circumscribed, they were of the utmost importance to perform. She could be the constant attendant of her beloved mother, and by cheerful assiduity and industrious habits, assist Willoughby in his exertions for their support, and make the frugal meal and lowly habitation comfortable to all. These

were not the romantic illusions of a momentary enthusiasm; they were the resolves of a reflective mind, drawn from the pure precepts of the Gospel; and an impartial observer might reasonably infer, how much more likely it was, that they should be reduced to practice, than Willoughby's violent protestations of amendment. Elizabeth heard with patience the half-formed sentences of the curious, and the common-place expressions of the worldly minded, but received with gratitude every mark of sympathy and real condolence. Trelawny had left his card at the door, and had purposely absented himself till the funeral was over, lest he should have been called upon to witness its solemnity. Mr. Vincent made every friendly exertion to tranquillize Willoughby's mind, and Willoughby began to estimate his worth, and from a conduct as delicate as it was sincere, to bear with less bitterness the weight of his recent obligation.

Mrs. Coventry looked to him as a steady friend and kind adviser; she spoke confidentially of all their future prospects, and Elizabeth felt for him a sisterly esteem and regard. She could not help contrasting the proofs of his friendship with the conduct of Trelawny, who had scarcely been in the neighbourhood since

Mr. Coventry's death; scenes of affliction suited not the temper of his mind, and the brilliancy of Elizabeth's beauty being obscured, the ardour of his passion was so much abated, that he could well prefer either the gaieties of London, or pleasurable excursions in the country, to the melancholy employment of comforting the widow in her affliction, or of promising love and reformation to the sorrowing daughter.

It is not in the first period of misfortune or trial, that the feelings of sorrow are most acute. The mind is sometimes lost in apathy, stunned as it were by the pressure of affliction, or so unavoidably occupied by necessary arrangements for the future, that the present appears to be only a state of chaos and confusion, and we cherish the mournful hope of indulging in all the luxury of woe in hours of future solitude.

"Mother, this is too much!" Coventry exclaimed the morning after the funeral, as Elizabeth entered her dressing room.

"Dear Willoughby," Elizabeth said, "I know my mother's whole mind on this subject: strange as it may appear, all remembrance of these jewels had escaped us; they are, I firmly believe, of sufficient value to repay our generous friend Mr. Vincent, and to settle with your

creditors. To be free of the world—to have you for our future support, for our future companion, appears to be an inestimable blessing: where are the brilliants which would balance in value, against such a scale of happiness?" Willoughby shook his head, and Elizabeth, afraid of enquiring farther into his affairs before her mother, turned the conversation by speaking of their removal from Coventry lodge. An apartment in London was thought to be the most private and eligible plan. Mrs. Coventry had few, and very distant relations, and any application to friends for pecuniary assistance was a feeling of humiliation she had yet to conquer.

Coventry wrote to Donavan, and after dwelling on his own faulty conduct, and avowing the shame and repugnance he had felt to confess to him the reasons which had disturbed the regularity of their correspondence, he endeavoured to describe the first meeting with his mother and sister, even before he knew the extent of their affliction in the death of his father. He spoke of Vincent's generous and friendly behaviour. Of all their future plans, and intended removal from Coventry lodge, and thus proceeded:

"From what I have said, Donavan, you may perhaps form some little idea of the state of my mind, when instead of receiving reproach, or hearing the lamentations of regret for my unpardonable conduct, I was soothed by the affectionate embrace of my mother, and supported by the Christian fortitude of my beloved and afflicted sister. All this you may in some degree imagine, but to attempt to give you any just idea of what I felt, when desperation induced me to enter the chamber which contained the mortal remains of my father, is an impracticable task; a bolt of ice seemed to shoot through my heart, which contrasted with the burning phrenzy of my brain, made me for some moments doubt my own sanity. Without daring to look on so revered a countenance, I fell on my knees by the coffin, unable to lift up my eyes to heaven—a prayer for pardon issued from my lips; and think you not, Donavan, that such a prayer is heard at the throne of grace? In the presence of my God, I breathed the most sacred vows to dedicate my future life to Him, and to the comfort and support of my beloved mother and sister. I arose more calm and composed, and I could then gaze on features which had never frowned even on my

unworthiness. Donavan, it is a true but unavailing reflection that other dear and tender relatives may be replaced, but a parent is gone for ever! and such an one as I have lost! He would ever have been my truest friend and counsellor, had I not permitted the world and its allurements to weaken the emotions of filial gratitude and duty. He once acknowledged that his confidence in me was unlimited, his affection unalterable. Oh, that I could recall that period! His last words breathed a father's wish to see an absent son, and I—heaven! there is madness in the thought. I was disgracefully concealing myself from the just demands of an importunate creditor. I will draw comfort from the reflection that he died unacquainted with the poverty of his family through my careless conduct. Assist me, Donavan, in the arduous task I am bound to perform: to forsake evil habits is surely the best criterion of repentance.

"But may I not derive some consolation from the thought, that my errors and follies have chiefly proved detrimental to myself alone. I have never seduced the wife, nor deceived the daughter of my friend; I have not ridiculed the faith of others, nor promulgated any reli-

gious doubts, for the sake of argument or controversy. I have in my heart reverenced every sacred institution, though I have been weakly drawn aside from practically acknowledging its importance. At my first outset in life, I seldom permitted worldly occupations to supersede my regular attendance at church, and when by progressive steps the hours of public worship were constantly profaned by idleness or pleasure, I then too justly date my most marked career of folly and extravagance.

"Your last letter, Donavan, spoke daggers to my heart; how charitable was your forbearance not to reproach me for negligence! Alas, you knew not that the man you confided in was seeking his own destruction, was becoming the willing slave of those prejudices and habits, which in their nature were both unsatisfactory and disgraceful. The hour of solitude sometimes indeed proved the hour of penitence, but the world and its temptations generally put reason and reflection to flight, and too fatally procrastinated the great work of reformation. Think not, however, that I dwell with selfish egotism on my own past errors, and present vain regrets; mine is not that spirit which cannot bear up with fortitude under the pressure

of evil, which cannot resolve with firmness, and act with decision. My mother and sister are the ties which bind me to a weary existence, and for whom my heart bleeds in unceasing despair. I am weak enough to dread their removal from this place; they think not of the 'thousand ills which poverty is heir to;' their affliction is comprized in the loss of my father!

"I am also weak enough to be sorry that all things had not gone on smoothly in regard to a brilliant establishment for Elizabeth; Mr. Trelawny offered her his hand—her refusal appeared to me at first the result of an extraordinary but romantic mind; she was not satisfied with his religious sentiments, nor could I comprehend that soul-directing principle, which gave security to her judgment, and reason to her arguments. When my mother shewed me the copy of her letter to Trelawny, I was looking for worldly advantages, and though I saw the motive of her refusal of his addresses, I could not estimate its wisdom. I believe he would not so tamely have given up the prize, but for a temporary alteration in Elizabeth's complexion; and the change in our circumstances, I have little doubt, gives him great

cause of exultation that he has escaped an union with the family. Donavan, I shall dread your acknowledgment of this letter: need I say be lenient—be merciful! I am resolved that my reformation shall be permanent. I consider your present confinement, in consequence of your accident, a very unfortunate circumstance; it deprives us all of an active as well as sympathizing friend in this our day of trial. In all situations

"I am your's faithfully,

"W. COVENTRY."

Donavan's answer on the moment of receiving the above letter will best speak his opinion and feelings.

"How shall I offer you, Coventry, that consolation which your present unhappy state so much requires!

"Believe that in the hour of trial, and the season of unfeigned repentance, you are dearer to me than in the zenith of thoughtless prosperity. May the same Power which has inflicted the stroke, arm you with fortitude to support it with resignation.

"I need not dwell on my own feelings, Co-

ventry: the loss of your excellent father has shaken and distressed my mind beyond all expression; but the ways of an omnipotent God are not our ways.

" Your call upon me to assist you in the arduous task you are henceforth bound to perform, shall not be disregarded: I will endeavour to tranquillize your wounded mind with all the fervour and interest of our long tried friendship. You must however allow me, like a skilful surgeon, thoroughly to probe the wound before we can expect a radical cure.

" That you have preferred the world to the duty you owed to God and to your parents, will hardly admit of palliation. You felt you were in the wrong road, and, not like the wise but mistaken traveller did you return before dear-bought experience had taught you the danger of the path; you sought happiness in the dazzling career of dissipation and folly; and, alas! you have found the pursuit has ended in clouds and darkness.

" Auspicious be that sacred moment, when the tear of penitence was shed on the last remains of an earthly parent! Auspicious be those feelings of remorse, which led to a renunciation of evil habits—which taught you, that self-exami-

nation was a salutary and important duty. Every man should know the quarter from which danger is most likely to proceed, and then conscience will generally convince him where he is most vulnerable. You certainly argue well, when you say, 'that to forsake iniquity is the criterion of repentance;' but you add not, (and believe me this is the rock on which the religion of the Gospel is founded,) that human repentance, depending wholly on our own strength to accomplish, is not only unstable, but unacceptable to God; and that through the mediating sacrifice of a Redeemer alone, the sins of the repentant are forgiven.

"It is this faith which marks the Christian profession, and gives stability to all our virtuous resolutions; far different from the violent and exclamatory effusions of that remorse which subsides, as the remembrance of awful and affecting scenes passes away—which turns to the world, and not to God, for present relief and future enjoyment.

"The consolation, Coventry, which you wish to derive from the thought that you have only been your own enemy, is false and unsatisfactory. You would have done better, if, instead of comparing your own conduct with that of the most

vicious and unprincipled, you had been actuated by those feelings which justified the publican in the Gospel.

"I wish I could as favourably exculpate you from other disgraceful vices and pursuits. I cannot help particularizing the fascinating power of gaming. There is, perhaps, no unworthy propensity of the mind more difficult to conquer than this, if once unwarrantably yielded to: and how frequently is the evil widened, which desperation madly hopes to cure, whilst honour, fame, and rectitude, are sacrificed to the insidious and destructive practice. Resolutions of future stability may be formed in some reasonable or suffering moment—repentance may transiently pierce the heart with many sorrows—but, as they rest not on a more stable foundation than human strength to hold sacred or to meliorate, the next, and the next temptation is yielded to with impunity, and an unprofitable remembrance only is retained of so imperfect a renunciation of sin and folly. That you have never ridiculed the faith of others, is only a proof that you had not gained the climax of guilt and depravity; for is there in the catalogue of human vices a darker shade than weakening the hope of the timid, or opposing

the subtlety of ridicule against the serious Christian? Willoughby, you cannot with justice derive any consolation from not having promulgated either your own doubts or unsupported opinions on religious subjects. We are not called upon for negative, but positive evidences of praiseworthy forbearance and intentions. Let me entreat you no longer to compare your own frailties, your neglect of the social and domestic duties of life, with the enormities and offences of others. Cast away all such self-sufficient arguments; and by supplying your lamented father's place to the surviving objects once so deservedly dear to him, you will in time regain that self-estimation which, duly limited, is not incompatible with the Christian character. Take comfort from the thought, that he died unacquainted with the extent of his pecuniary losses. You must now confide in the blessing of Heaven for future temporal success in all worldly undertakings; but you must yourself unite to that dependence rigid application and industrious habits; or, like the man in the fable, you will fail for want of personal exertion. You must bear with firmness the sneer of ridicule or the accusation of singularity, and on all occasions endeavour to act

from higher motives than worldly opinions. This is but unfashionable counsel, Willoughby; but never can it be too strongly enforced, that self-deception is the forerunner of every serious evil. If you have never yet asked yourself a most important question, What is the end of our present existence? let this hour of trial suggest it to you with all due solemnity. Alas! my friend, is it to flutter away hour after hour, and day after day, in frivolity, in idleness, or luxurious habits? Is every revolving year only to witness dissipated or disgraceful pursuits, unstable resolutions, or neglected duties? And is man ever remunerated for the slavery of vice? for living the life of a heathen, and disseminating the creed of infidelity? Say, Willoughby, for you must have witnessed the doubts, the inquietude, the wretchedness of many associates in their hour of sickness, of disappointment, or of trial. Could the remembrance of vice, or the profession of infidelity, soothe them to peace, or arm them with courage, to bear any reverse of fortune with resolution and humility? Take a retrospect of the past, with due condemnation of all that has hitherto been inimical to your peace and welfare. This may prove the most eventful period of your existence, and therefore

be not discouraged at the prospect of some adverse hours; for they may indeed be 'blessings in disguise.'

"It is peculiarly unfortunate that I am still confined to the house; but my heart is with friends I love so well. Say to Mrs. Coventry all that gratitude for her former invaluable attention and kindness, all that heart-felt sympathy for her present heavy trial can dictate, and yet my feelings would then be but imperfectly expressed. My best and affectionate wishes are both for her and your sister. Adieu, dear Willoughby, and believe that I ever am

"Your faithful friend,

"A. Donavan."

Several other letters passed betwixt Willoughby and Donavan, who had nearly recovered from the effects of his accident, and was preparing to meet his afflicted friends in town.

CHAPTER VII.

Many of Willoughby's creditors were satisfied; he had not the courage to avow all his debts; and with the disposal of unnecessary furniture, &c. very little money remained to begin their new and melancholy plan of life. At length the trying period arrived, when even the uncertain tenure of the common necessaries of life was to succeed its more than "elegant sufficiencies." Elizabeth endeavoured to support her deeply affected companions—Mrs. Coventry's sorrows, "whispering her o'er fraught heart, to bid it break"—while Willoughby, alive to every remorseful feeling, began to shrink from the anticipation of those duties and exertions which conscience convinced him he was so strictly pledged to perform and to undergo. The day previous to their departure, Mr. Vincent's countenance spoke what was passing in his bosom: he could not conceal from himself the hopeless passion which consumed him, and most incoherently endeavoured to express his regard and esteem for the family; acknowledged that their removal

from the neighbourhood would take from him one great solace of his existence; and, with ill-disguised emotion, was compelled to bid them adieu. Mr. Trelawny had also talked of deep regrets, sympathy, and feeling; and in his last visit, before Elizabeth left the lodge, avowed everlasting attachment; and was on the point of renewing the offer he had persuaded himself would be decidedly refused, when she interrupted him, by expressing her dislike of all vain professions and unmeaning flattery.

"How little you are aware of my sufferings, Miss Coventry! That I have loved you——"

"Profane not the sacred name of love," again interrupting him, "by talking of an attachment you do not feel. Our long acquaintance—— But why should I look back to the past? My mind is ill at ease; and, whilst I am convinced that our dissimilar opinions and pursuits would never have tended to confidence and happiness in the married state, I sincerely wish you every future felicity."

"Would you have had patience with me, I might have become all you wished; but, alas! you never loved me."

"I certainly never preferred you sufficiently to become your wife, Mr. Trelawny; and of

this you ought ere now to have been fully convinced. We part friends." And giving him her hand, she immediately left the room.

The last hours at Coventry lodge, the preparation for the journey, the journey itself under such melancholy circumstances, and the taking possession of a confined abode in London, are trials better felt than described. Elizabeth softened or relieved, as far as possible, all inconveniences and fatigue from her mother. She took the entire management of their economical table and house expences. She would often attempt to give some cheerful turn to the conversation, when their restricted means overpowered Mrs. Coventry, and drew from her brother the ill-disguised sigh of despondency. She herself endeavoured to subdue all selfish considerations, and derive comfort from the assurance that God would never inflict more than his creatures could bear. The apartment was in a quiet part of London, near the new squares. The single sitting room, the confined chamber, and other inconveniences, increased the gloomy and remorseful feelings which Coventry exclusively endured; and the hour of solitude was ever to him the hour of indulged misery. He dreaded to see or to meet any of his former as-

sociates; and the first energy of his grief and feelings seemed to be lost in the sadness of despair. He also dreaded to see Donavan: letters had continually passed, and Donavan was every day expected in town. The first interview was a painful one; but the words, "My dear friend," seemed to re-assure Coventry's agitated mind: yet he could only exclaim. "Your wretched, your repentant friend!"

"Wretchedness, Willoughby, cannot be the consequence of real repentance."

A long and distressing conversation ensued. Donavan endeavoured to point out the only path of peace; but he was grieved to find that the plan which Willoughby had in theory laid down for his future conduct, was not so easily reduced to practice; that the contrast of his present life with its former indulgences, bore heavily on his mind; and that the world still held him in subjection, and swayed his actions. Donavan remained in town as long as professional duties would permit, and devoted his whole time and attention to his unfortunate friend. He was deeply affected by Mrs. Coventry's situation, and with the fortitude and cheerful exertions which Elizabeth evinced; and he for once envied those who had the means, as well as the

heart, to restore unobtrusive merit to ease and independence.

Donavan's living was a small one; and even if some existing obstacles could be conquered, it was at present very inadequate to the expences of a family. He had other expectations—he would decide nothing rashly—but he had seen enough of Elizabeth Coventry's character to estimate and to feel its value. This was not the cool deliberate caution of an insensible heart: but hitherto, even Willoughby was unacquainted with all that had agitated its feelings and interested its affections. Elizabeth, during his visit, was soothed as by the kindness of a brother: she still thought him one of the most perfect of human beings—she still thought that woman must be truly blest who could engage his heart; and if she for a moment lamented the change in her complexion, she sought not to investigate the feeling, and endeavoured to conquer the ennuï, and to overcome the blank which Donavan's departure had seemed to spread around.

Coventry still felt incapable of making those exertions so necessary, but so repugnant to his mind: his health declined; and Mrs. Coventry's distress was redoubled, as she anticipated the

increasing indisposition of her only worldly support. Their finances were daily decreasing; and Elizabeth now began to dread every evil which poverty could inflict. She had frequently hinted her wishes, that the acquirements she possessed might become of real utility; and sometimes sportively declared, that as she could run no risk from the danger of being a beauty, she would herself see more of the world, and prove of some importance in its general scale, by "teaching the young idea how to shoot."

"You cannot be serious, Elizabeth," said Willoughby. "What! leave my mother?"

"Not so," she replied. "I will only devote a few hours in the day to pupils. I have heard it is lucrative, and——"

"Become a governess," he interrupted—"be subject to the mean rebuffs of purse-proud ignorance—oh, Elizabeth, never!"

"My dear brother," she gravely answered, "I am sorry we see things in so different a point of view. There is no humiliation in bending to the decrees of Heaven, in wishing honourably to increase the comforts of life. True dignity of mind is not dependent on any outward situation—I mean no romantic attempt to distinguish

myself; nor can I ever feel degraded by the pride of birth or the insolence of wealth: the indignity would not rest on me, but on my employers."

"My dear girl, you are ignorant of the world: its opinions are, in some measure, despotic. Consider, I entreat you. May not your present plan be the means of your never settling in life? To marry an unportioned girl is no uncommon event; but to marry a governess might be repugnant—to those whose respectable situations or professions——"

"You will really make me angry, Willoughby," she interrupted, with a good-humoured smile, not in accordance with her assertion. "Shall I give up a present probable good for a future contingency? I think I shall never marry; but I am sure I should despise the man who could think me less an object of regard, for having devoted the intellects God has blessed me with for individual or general advantage."

"'Despise the man,' and 'never marry.' These are indeed young lady-like resolutions."

"A truce, dear Willoughby, to unpleasant altercations. Recollect, I have made no vain nor romantic resolutions: but on some points, I

must not only judge for myself, but act decisively. Could our beloved and departed father——"

"Oh! in mercy, do not mention him, Elizabeth."

"Yes, my dearest brother, I must mention him: he is never absent from my thoughts. I am confident, that 'if departed spirits are permitted to review this world,' he approves of my exertions, and knows how sacred is the grief which hallows his memory. Willoughby, let us meet the evils we cannot avoid, and brave the contumely of this little world, when it would condemn or interfere with the duties we owe to God, to ourselves, or to our neighbour."

"There spoke the sentiments of my invaluable friend, Donavan; and I blush to think how little I have hitherto profited by them."

Elizabeth also blushed; but whence the emotion proceeded, it is not necessary to investigate.

"Oh that the quiet grave could shelter this wretched being!"

"That the decidedly profligate, that the infidel despiser of our holy religion, should impatiently call upon death to shelter them from the pressure of any misfortune or disappoint-

ment, is indeed a temerity consistent with their character; but you—oh my brother!——"

"Enough, enough, Elizabeth," he impatiently interrupted: "my feelings may be erroneous, yet they are uncontrollable. Will you take time for consideration, in regard to the plan you have in view?"

"I will do nothing without my mother's approbation," was her immediate reply.

Willoughby could not help encouraging the hope that Donavan and Elizabeth were not indifferent to one another; and although at present he had only marked on either side friendly and delicate attentions, he feared that even in the eye of his friend the humiliating capacity of governess would check Donavan's partiality.

Donavan had left town, anxious and uneasy at the disposition of Coventry's mind; and he was persuaded that his health would eventually become the sacrifice of such irritable and ungoverned feelings, and render him unable to put in practice those exertions which had hitherto existed only in theory, but which were so requisite for the future welfare of his family.

As Donavan had feared, a lingering illness was the consequence of his mind's depression.

The following letter, soon after his recovery, will again evince that he too frequently acted either from blameable despair, or from the impulse of the moment, rather than from any fixed principle of conduct.

" The suggestions of folly, the actions of a half-distracted mind, shall not be concealed, Donavan. As you already know, since you left us, I have been confined to the house by a long and lingering indisposition. My mother and my sister have alternately proved the tender nurse and reasonable companion: they insisted on my taking medical advice; and through various self-deprivations, secured to me all the comforts in sickness, and the indulgence of my various caprices. Donavan, I who have lavished away the sums of thoughtless extravagance—who, in the career of dissipation and pleasure, knew not the value of the money I was expending; I who have wasted in one day's folly what would give ease and comfort to objects dearer to me than my own existence; now live to see them wanting almost the necessaries of life—aye, and without the power to prevent the horrors of approaching poverty. A chance circumstance revealed to me our present situa-

tion; for my angel sister, at the trying period of sickness, endeavoured to guard my mind from all fruitless inquietude. I immediately determined to escape from the confinement of a sick chamber, though repeatedly warned of the risk I should run of a relapse. I was alive only to the idea of proving by my exertions how I repented of my late folly. Alas! a nervous fever proved the consequence of my obstinacy; and we are only more deeply plunged in misery. I begin now to gain health and strength, and have once more vainly anticipated cheering days and better prospects. I say vainly; for I have already made even personal application to those friends, whose power and fortune I thought were commensurate with their wish to serve me, and have hitherto been deluded by that air-built fabric—a modern promise. The other morning, carelessly looking over some papers, the handwriting of Mrs. M. caught my attention. Here, Donavan, I crave your patience and forbearance. Mrs. M. once moved in the circle of fashionable life: her vices and follies veiled by the artful semblance of propriety. I was attracted by her beauty, and fascinated by her manners. To a flirtation on my part, succeeded something like sentiment on hers; and, without

the imputation of vanity, I was convinced of her growing partiality in my favour. My senses were enslaved; but concurring circumstances soon precluded our meeting; and absence, which is the test of true love, weakened the transient delusion of my mind. Mrs. M.'s fortune was reputed to be large and independent: and the madness of a moment now suggested the thought of availing myself of her partial sentiments, and immediately to propose our marriage. I went to her house—she gently chid me for my past neglect—I had the honour to confess my real situation, nor did she seem devoid of feeling as I spoke; but, regaining her usual spirit, she said, 'You may thank your lucky stars, Coventry, that you did not solicit the honour of my hand a few weeks sooner. I really like you too well to wish, situated as you now are, that you should have been encumbered with a wife deeply in debt, imprudent in conduct, and extravagant in habits. I certainly, on our first acquaintance, hoped to have made you my dupe; but I have not only conferred the favour on another, but have had it again returned on myself. Coventry, I have been married and forsaken in one week. My antiquated spouse made me his wife

to gain a fortune, and I married him to be freed from all pecuniary embarrassments.'

" Donavan, can you judge of the nature of my feelings, or imagine, that with returning reason, how I hailed so eventful an escape from misery? Our protracted conversation at once convinced me of the principles of this worthless dissipated woman; that from art and management alone, she had maintained a deceptive respectability. She did not forbid my future visits: but need I say that I left her with the sincerest determination to see her no more? I returned home to a joyless frugal meal, to the tender and anxious presence of two of the dearest beings I had on earth. Donavan, when I consider that through my own extravagance and want of punctuality they are reduced to poverty, I am no longer master of myself or of any power of exertion. Elizabeth has hinted her wishes to undertake the care of pupils for a few hours in the day. She would with cheerfulness immediately arrange this plan; but pride, worldly pride, too inherent I fear in my nature, has urged her for the present to suspend her intention. Is the time I have lost irremediable? Alas! I turn from the world with disgust—a

world which till lately was too much the idol of my thoughts, and the criterion of my actions. What is life without the powers of enjoyment—without the blessing of a self-approving conscience? But under all circumstances, I am ever

" Your's faithfully,

" W. Coventry."

THE ANSWER.

" My dear friend,

" The time which you have hitherto lost, is, I trust, not irremediable. I will not, at this moment, enter into all the subjects of your letter. I write now, only to entreat you to have farther medical advice. Your nervous system is still deranged, and hence your mind is unequal to any salutary exertion. Seek not to conceal from Mrs. Coventry the malady which consumes you: it is a cruel, I must add, an unwarrantable kindness, to endeavour to cheat our anxious friends of a momentary uneasiness, when by so doing we may be accumulating much future misery. I most heartily congratulate you on your late momentous escape. Contrast your present situation to what it would

have been, had you married an unworthy dissipated woman. By the impetuosity of a moment, you have nearly been undone: the pecuniary embarrassments of your wife would have immured you within the walls of a prison—a wife who would have laughed at your folly, and exultingly have owed her freedom to your rashness—a wife with whom your mother and sister must ever have blushed to have associated! How forcibly is the greatness of your sister's mind opposed to your's! She thinks, and she thinks rightly, that there would be no degradation, in the estimation of every honourable mind, in seeking a pecuniary employment. What is pride, Coventry—worldly pride—but the weakness of a perverted imagination? Endeavour to regain your health by those means which Providence has appointed; and your present joyless meal, though it may continue to be frugal, will be seasoned by appetite and peace. I have much more to say, but will only here add, that

"I am most truly your's,

"DONAVAN."

CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Coventry anxiously marked Willoughby's altered countenance: her own health affected, and her spirits depressed by recent affliction, she mournfully anticipated even greater trials of fortitude. Elizabeth concealed from her the very low state of their finances; but determined to pursue her intention of instructing pupils for some hours in the morning, notwithstanding Willoughby's continued objections to the plan. She therefore cheerfully arranged her domestic occupations, and allotted the hours for her absence from home which she could best spare from the company of her mother. Change of air was strenuously recommended for the establishment of Coventry's health, and he was at length persuaded to accept Donavan's pressing and friendly invitation. One of his letters to Elizabeth may best describe his feelings.

"Elizabeth, my sister, when I contrast my own character with that of Donavan—when I think what I am, and what I might have been—

it appears almost impossible to regain that self-esteem which contributes to harmonize the feelings, and soften worldly disappointments. It is true that his profession could never have been my choice; but I had duties of equal importance to perform; and had I devoted the talents I was blessed with, to the study of that profession which was once my delight and pride, I might at this moment have given a respectable asylum to a beloved mother and sister, and in some measure have supplied the place of him for whom they so deservedly mourn. Retrospection works my mind to agony. Donavan listens to its useless accusations with patience, he combats my errors and prejudices, and endeavours to apply the healing balm of religious consolation. On my once, with too much irritability of spirit, exclaiming—' Why should life be valuable, without one cheering ray to gild its dreary path? Why are trials and afflictions permitted without an adequate share of fortitude to bear up under their pressure?'—he said, ' When you, Willoughby, can bring your mind to the conviction that all human events are guided by an over-ruling Providence, then, and then only, will you understand the presumption of your first question: and as to your

second—look to the primary cause of many of the evils of life—do they not often originate in the vices and follies of man himself? Extravagance brings on the trial of poverty; intemperance is productive of disease and suffering; and a dishonourable conduct will sooner or later subject us to the contempt of our fellow mortals, and to all the bitterness of a wounded conscience.'

" ' But why then,' I returned, ' are we formed by nature so prone to error, so liable to be led astray by the influence of passion and by the power of prejudice? How often is prosperity a snare, and adversity too bitter a trial! Had our nature been more perfect, even by your own statement, the ' thousand ills that flesh is heir to,' would be more generally escaped.'

" ' To question the wisdom of God,' he replied, ' is the height of human presumption. Imagine that his mercy and justice are equal to his wisdom, and we shall acknowledge the folly of useless or speculative inquiries.'

" ' All this is very true,' I answered, ' but if, from the misconduct of an individual, a more general misery ensue, how shall we reconcile the idea of infinite justice with infinite mercy? Why do the good often suffer from the vices of the

profligate, unconscious themselves of bringing on the evils that are inflicted?'

"'Such trials are no proof of the judgments of God; 'the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;' and, whilst experience teaches that we cannot alter one dispensation of an almighty power, we ought not presumptuously to question that power—or ask, why man is created a fallible, rather than a perfect being? Had there been no remedy vouchsafed for his fallibility—could he not become acceptable to God through redemption—there might be more reason for the captiousness of vain inquiry: and as to the instance to which I know you allude, the *good* suffering for the follies of the inconsiderate—all things are so in mercy as well as wisdom ordained, that the evils and disappointments which are inflicted, are often the source of future consolation and benefit. Think you not, that the change of fortune which your excellent mother experiences, will be more than compensated, if she can witness a permanent change of conduct in the son of her affections? All amiable and good as your sister has ever appeared to be, but for these trials she could not have shone so eminently bright in the exertion of that fortitude

and resignation of spirit which perfects obedience, in the consolatory tenderness of filial love, and in the triumph of mind over the common vanity of her sex.'

"If any thing, Elizabeth, can excite the vanity from which you have the character of being exempted, it must be the praise and good opinion of such a man as Donavan. I wish I could better profit by his excellent advice—I wish I could think as he does. Happy the woman that could attach such a mind, and cheer through love and friendship every social and domestic hour! Donavan ever speaks with reverence of the marriage state; but I have not yet discovered among his fair neighbours any one to whom he pays more than a casual attention; indeed, I have every reason to believe that he has suffered the disappointment of an early attachment: hence that seriousness which sometimes shades his countenance, and those occasional fits of abstraction which I have with pain remarked—I say occasional, for it is only to a close observer that the fluctuation of his feelings can be known. When he first took possession of this living, his fine open countenance, urbanity of manners, and gentlemanly deportment, gave every promise to the rich and gay,

that the convivial companion and indulgent pastor would be in him united; and the poor were encouraged to suppose they might go on in that latitude of conduct which, from the age and infirmities of their late incumbent, had received no salutary check. But when Donavan refused to accommodate his way of life and his customs to the engagements and occupations of the former, and severely reprobated the idle habits of the latter, he was looked upon as little better than an enthusiast or a methodist, unfit to associate with persons of more liberal ideas and principles. To turn anchorite—to seclude himself from all society—was not, we well know, either his choice or his intention. To preach the doctrine of superstition and bigotry, to paint religion in dark or desponding colours, were as disconsonant to his own principles as to the taste of his new parishioners; and when the rich found in him not only the rational and well-informed companion, but a companion that could enjoy all the innocent sallies of convivial mirth—that he was learned without pedantry, gay without folly, and on many occasions instructive without solemnity; the most reflective honoured him for the steadiness of his conduct, and the dissipated, though they regarded him

as an extraordinary character, could not withhold their respect and esteem. By his visitations at the abodes of vice or poverty—his uniform attendance in the hour of sickness, anguish, or repentance—he has imperceptibly gained upon the confidence of the poor, and is now looked up to as their ablest monitor and sincerest friend. Public worship was at first but thinly attended—the afternoon service generally neglected; but soon the opulent, from admiring him as an orator, listened to his doctrine; and the poor, attracted by the earnestness of his manner, began to feel an interest in performing their Sunday duties, and profited by the well-directed zeal of their pastor. His patience and perseverance in combating the prejudices and enlightening the ignorant, are most exemplary. In defiance of the accusation of singularity, he retains every laudable custom; and his servants and dependents are taught to serve both their heavenly and earthly Master with reverence and diligence. He affects no unnecessary parade; yet nothing but the work of mercy can interrupt his preparation for the important duties of the Sabbath. In the pulpit he avoids all personal allusions, convinced that they often proceed more from private pre-

judice than from the wish to reform. He judiciously attends to times and seasons; consequently his admonitions seldom fail in their effects.

" I told him, the other day, I thought him too strict on some subjects—we had been speaking of the theatre, and public amusements in general—he replied, ' I am not surprised, Willoughby, at our dissimilar opinions; and I will candidly own to you, that at an early period of my life the theatre was one of my favourite amusements; yet I soon became disgusted with the profligacy with which it is surrounded. As to the recreation of dancing, limited by a just decorum and moderation, there can be nothing reprehensible in the exercise; it is the abuse of innocent amusements, not the amusements themselves, that constitutes their folly. I am now speaking generally; for I cannot think it is either decorous or respectable, to see the minister of his parish aping the petit maitre in the dance, and the next day assuming in the pulpit the awful solemnity of correcting vice and levity of conduct, even from the precepts of the Gospel he is enforcing. You might however be convinced, when I joined in the little juvenile party we were present at the other evening,

what line I would wish to draw between general habits and casual recreation. As to cards, my dear Willoughby, when I consider to what vices they lead, I am decidedly of opinion that the instant the mind becomes too much interested in the amusement, or the temper is lost, they should be wholly given up. The desire of amusement is probably the first step to that vice which has fatally proved the ruin of thousands; and I should certainly entertain a higher opinion of that man's mind and intellects, whose midnight occupation did not furnish a just cause for repentance on each succeeding day.' Donavan observed my agitation. Oh, Elizabeth, a wounded conscience who can bear?

"He continued—'Of all the excesses to which the human mind is addicted, gaming is the most insidious; but let no one say, that this or that particular failing or passion is not to be conquered by reason, and a just conviction of its depravity—by a sense, a returning sense, of the duty we owe to God and man. If we cannot resist temptations, we must not meet them; and it is the dependence on our own strength that so generally defeats the intended victory.'

"But, Elizabeth, it is useless to narrate the conversations which pass between us. Of what

is my mind composed, that it does not yield instant conviction to arguments so just and reasonable? I am shocked at myself, when I feel that, much as I admire Donavan, I could not be contented to pass my life as he does. Even the country, which was at first so soothing to my harassed mind, begins to lose its charm. Alas! poverty and self-accusations are inimical to the charms of solitude: they seek the visionary hope of relief and mitigation by flying from the present scene. And when I ask myself if I am easier when surrounded by the bustle and gaieties of a London life—when I am witnessing the sad reverse of all things, which you and my beloved mother experience—I likewise ask myself, what is the charm that attaches me to life, for ever deprived of its enjoyments, feeling that I am the cause of all your misery? I have endeavoured, and do endeavour, to believe all that Donavan believes of a superintending Providence. I endeavour to give credence to all that religion enforces; but some new doubt ever disturbs my mind, and it is again without ballast and without consolation. I am resolved, on my return to town, to make every exertion to gain a lucrative employment. I would traverse the farthest limits of the globe, rather than suffer

what I now suffer. I fear I have pained your dear and affectionate heart by writing thus freely. Conceal from my mother what might give her pain, and love always

" Your friend and brother,

" Willoughby Coventry."

Elizabeth read over the above letter so frequently, that she began to suspect one part of it was peculiarly interesting; and the mental apostrophe, " Happy indeed the woman who could attach such a man as Donavan!" generally closed each perusal.

CHAPTER IX.

Coventry was still the prey of unavailing remorse; unavailing, because he did not practically endeavour to subdue it by that repentance, and those exertions, which in the first moments of affliction were so enthusiastically called forth. He was too frequently the slave of impulse, and those feelings which are not also founded on principle, are ever liable to change, or to be suppressed with every existing occurrence.

At this period, Frederick Vincent offered in the most delicate but earnest manner, the loan of that sum which had, after Mr. Coventry's funeral, been repaid him. He would listen to no denial—he would take no excuse; and a temporary supply being thus forced upon Willoughby, again aroused him to make those exertions so necessary for the welfare of all. He purposely avoided former acquaintances; he felt convinced that the man of the world was not the being to confide in, or to look up to for support in the trying hour of adversity; he had

by chance once met Trelawny, and the awkward embarrassment of each party rendered the salutation cool and unproductive of any thing like confidence. Willoughby turned his thoughts towards the army, but there not only the prospect was discouraging and uncertain, the affectionate entreaties also of a beloved mother rested their full weight on his mind.

As Coventry was one day returning home to take the opinion of his dearest counsellors, of an offer he had had to go to India for a year or two on some intricate business, and from which an important emolument was to be derived, he was the means of rescuing an elderly gentleman from the most imminent danger, who lay stunned by a fall from his horse. With great presence of mind he dragged the sufferer from his perilous situation. The gentleman's rescue, the crowd which was collecting, all seemed to be the work of a moment; and when Mr. Onslow recovered his recollection, being informed who it was that had probably saved his life, he endeavoured to make every suitable and grateful acknowledgment. The tenour of his accents convinced Coventry that medical assistance was requisite, he therefore offered to accompany him home.

On the arrival of the physician, Mr. Onslow very reluctantly parted from Willoughby, with many assurances of his gratitude, and repeated invitations to his house. For several following days Coventry called at the door, and received but very unfavourable accounts of the old gentleman's health. The fall had completely deranged his nervous system, which added to many serious bruises, confined him to his room longer than was at first expected. At length he was so well recovered as to wish to see, and to converse with Willoughby, and after the interview, Willoughby's repeated refusals to partake of a family dinner, always vexed and irritated Mr. Onslow; both from feelings of gratitude, and from the wish to be better acquainted with the preserver of his life. The following letter which Coventry wrote to Donavan will best shew the repugnance he had felt to accept of any invitations.

After mentioning the accident which had introduced him to Mr. Onslow, he thus proceeds.

" A thousand times I had accused myself of pride and inconsistency, when I refused the invitations of a man I had accidentally been of service to; he was rich and prosperous, I was

poor and dependent. I had never sat at the board of affluence, but as an equal and a friend. That boasted dignity of mind which in theory I had so often expatiated on, I could not reduce to practice. I dreaded some casual enquiry or general remark, which might lead to an explanation of what I was, or what I am: but a chance occurrence forced me into Mr. Onslow's house, and since that day I have been his frequent, and without vanity, I may add, his welcome guest. On the first day of my introduction, while waiting in the drawing room for his daughter and her companion, the only ladies of the family, Mr. Onslow told me he was in town for a few months, on an important termination of a law suit, and to give his daughter the advantage of the best masters in London to perfect her in music and drawing, in both which accomplishments, with all a father's pride, he confessed she particularly excelled. When the ladies entered, Mr. Onslow introduced me to his daughter in the most flattering terms, and added, "I need not urge you, Ellinor, to express your grateful acknowledgments to Mr. Coventry for being the means of preserving your father's life." You must figure to yourself, Donavan, all that passed at such a moment;

you must imagine the blush that mantled on Ellinor's cheek, and the acknowledgments that issued from the most beautiful of coral lips; and also imagine, that in a few minutes we were all seated at the dinner-table. Pleased with my reception, and with the attentions of the fascinating Ellinor, I endeavoured to throw off that restraint of manner in which retrospection had of late so often enveloped the powers of my mind: I became colloquial; I felt above the world, and even sought to improve the flattering prepossession which Mr. Onslow appeared to have conceived of my abilities. Donavan, had I sealed the promise of my early youth, had perseverance and industry given me celebrity in the profession I had embraced—but it is weak and unprofitable to dwell on useless regrets, all may be comprized in this sentence; Had I ever been a son worthy of such a father as mine was! I have not yet decided, nor is it for some little time necessary, on the prudence of leaving this country; and 'should fate command me to the farthest verge of the green earth,' there, why even there, no song of peace, but gloomy anticipations would sink my soul to despondency. My mother and sister are pleased when I am in the society of my new

friends. Miss Onslow is a perfect model of female beauty, even your stoicism would admit this; her manners are soft and feminine, and she is highly accomplished. The harp, accompanied by her voice, whilst its power is seductive, almost soothes the soul to peace, and she sometimes chides me by her looks, if I am unusually absent from the house. She emphatically styles me her friend, and I cannot help entertaining the suspicion that she has some engagement of the heart: whether it amounts to attachment, time must determine—well, be it so! My sun is early set, and I could almost exclaim, 'Would that my race were run.'

"For ever your's faithfully,

"W. COVENTRY."

Elizabeth's engagements did not preclude her from devoting much time to Mrs. Coventry, and to her own domestic occupations and pursuits. She had three young pupils; their mother, Mrs. Matthews, was highly prejudiced in her favour, and being an ignorant but good-natured woman, she really thought Miss Coventry was quite a prodigy of learning. She had herself been raised by marriage from obscurity, and as her beauty lost the charm o

novelty, Mr. Matthews's attentions decreased, and she was eventually left to enjoy in solitary state the splendid establishment of a very affluent fortune. He had always treated her with liberality and kindness, provided she did not interfere with his pursuits; and her children, her carriage, and her love of dress, soon both interested her mind, and gratified her vanity.

One morning as the children were taking their lessons, a friendly physician was, through a servant's mistake, shewn in. Mrs. Matthews was sitting at work in the room, as she loved to hear, as she expressed herself, "Miss Coventry play on the music." Dr. Robson was pleased with the scene, and after some necessary questions to a little invalid, looking through his spectacles very attentively at Elizabeth, he said, "My good young lady, how long has that redness appeared in your face?" She explained the accidental circumstance, and after some gallant, but good-humoured remarks and questions, he added, "Do not think me presuming, if I request you to try a remedy I can safely recommend, for though to restore the brilliancy of such a complexion might endanger the peace of many, I cannot resist the vanity of immortalizing my own fame by ——"

" Pray, Doctor," interrupted Mrs. Matthews, " don't you think the sea would be of great service to Miss Coventry as well as to my little girl?"

" Certainly I do, Madam, but I knew not exactly how this young lady was situated, whether she could with convenience undertake the journey."

" Then, my dear, you shall go with us I declare. An't I a mother? and do you think I should object to either of my daughters going to Brighton to recover her complexion?"

" My mother," Elizabeth replied, " I dare say would not object, Madam, but she is so situated that I cannot leave her."

" That is very dutiful of you, my dear, but la! bless me, only think how soon a month or two would pass away; it shan't cost you nothing, and how glad you would be to come home quite a beauty. Say something more, good Doctor, you can persuade young ladies better than I can."

The old gentleman smiled and said,

" Think of the scheme, my dear young lady, give no hasty answer to Mrs. Matthews's excellent proposal; consult your friends, and let me see you again."

When the Doctor departed, Mrs. Matthews so warmly pressed the subject, that she extorted Elizabeth's promise to consult Mrs. Coventry, and to abide by her decision; and then by way of encouragement, promised that Elizabeth should see all that was to be seen at Brighton—go to the libraries—walk on the Steine—dance at the balls, and take a drive every day in the new open carriage.

Elizabeth feeling that these promises proceeded from kindness, replied,

"What would you think of me, my dear Madam, were I to affirm that such pleasures would not gratify me? that having once been in a different situation of life, I could not mix in society without feeling the contrast, without being subject to mortifying and unpleasant reflections? I owe this explanation to you, Madam," tears prevented her proceeding.

Mrs. Matthews approached her, and taking hold of her hand, said,

"My dear, I always thought you a lady born and bred; there is something so taking and genteel in your manner, and if you will but go with us to Brighton, you shall do as you like—have a room to yourself—read your own books, and go out only when you like—come, I'm sure

we shall do very well together; and who knows but one day or other I may see you married to a Lord? particularly if sea-bathing brings back your nice complexion."

Elizabeth had regained her self-possession, and was again obliged to promise, she would immediately mention Mrs. Matthews's proposal to her mother.

In a short time the Brighton plan was arranged, nor had it been a very easy task to persuade Willoughby to approve of it. All parties disliked the publicity of the place, but the restoration of Elizabeth's health and complexion at once influenced Mrs. Coventry's consent to her leaving home.

CHAPTER X.

The morning of their departure at length arrived, and Elizabeth, with every tremulous feeling at this painful separation from her mother, soon found herself seated with Mrs. Matthews in the travelling carriage, vainly endeavouring to rally her spirits, and to appear cheerful to her delighted companions.

"Well, I do think," said Mrs. Matthews to the children, "your papa is the best creature in the world; he bids me not spare for expense, but I do not mean to be extravagant, though I know he would like us to appear like people of consequence. He was pleased to hear that you, Miss Coventry, was to accompany us. Lord love ye, my dear, don't stand upon ceremony, have your cry out. Why I remember the day I left home to be married, I almost choked myself endeavouring to keep in my tears, but after a few miles I got into spirits like, and the great hotel we came to, quite amused and surprised me."

Elizabeth was obliged to give up the hope of

any thing like cheerful conversation, and mildly said, " Indeed, Madam, I shall be better to-morrow; I am truly sensible of all your kindness;" and Mrs. Matthews soon amused herself by wondering at what hour they should arrive at Brighton, and whether they should like the house taken for them on the Marine Parade, as well as if one on the Steine had been engaged.

Elizabeth was struck with wonder and admiration when she first beheld the varied and unbounded sea. The party had arrived at Brighton at a late dinner hour, nor could she withdraw her eyes from the wide expanse of water, calmed from a summer's breeze, and her fancy would now and then contrast the placid scene before her, with the wintry blast and desolating storm.

" Come, my dear, eat your dinner," continually repeated Mrs. Matthews, " you must be faint for want of victuals: you shall have a room that fronts the sea, and then you can always be looking at it when you are at leisure. We are not dressed sufficiently to go to the library, just to see who and who's together this evening, and so we'll pay the fishes a visit on the beech. I hope our boxes will come to-

morrow, and that our dresses won't be tumbled, for I quite long to enjoy myself here."

Elizabeth estimated the kindness and good nature of Mrs. Matthews, but their feelings and expectations were so widely different, that she endeavoured to suppress the contending emotions of her mind; and "these are thy works, Parent of good," contributed to calm that irritability of spirit which existing circumstances had given rise to.

By some mistake the paraphernalia could not arrive till the Tuesday following, and on Sunday morning Elizabeth appeared at the breakfast table equipped for church.

Mrs. Matthews asked with some surprise, "if she were going to chapel or to church: you will be more snug, my dear, at church, and I am really very sorry not to have a proper dress to go to chapel in; the first appearance of genteel folks is a great thing at these public places."

Elizabeth made a modest but appropriate reply, hinting "that at church, least of all places, dress ought to be considered."

"That is very true, my dear, but can't I say my prayers in a genteel gown as well as in a travelling dress? many people I know make

worse excuses than I do for not going to church; were I once to be seen there this figure, would any one ever believe I was a nabob's wife?"

Elizabeth, judging it was not a proper time to argue the subject, hoped Mrs. Matthews had no objection to her going to church with the young ladies.

Mrs. Matthews then immediately settled that her slight mourning did not look very shabby, that the children should accompany her in the carriage, advising them to go soon in order to secure a good place.

For some days after Elizabeth's arrival at Brighton, she could not recover the usual tone of her mind; she thought of home—her brother's disappointed views—the unsettled state of his spirits—his indecision, and procrastinating conduct, harassed and depressed her feelings; and there were moments when she bitterly repented leaving her mother to brave all difficulties alone. But soon experiencing that the indulgence of such inquietude must militate against the task she had undertaken, reason prompted her to every necessary exertion, and she adopted and followed those plans which duty and conscience suggested. She avoided

as much as possible general society, and her only altercation with Mrs. Matthews, proceeded from her wish to decline joining in parties of pleasure, or to frequent the hot and crowded libraries every evening. Some latent feeling, perhaps proceeding from one spark of unconquered pride, gave rise to the wish of entire seclusion; the ungentlemanly stare from one sex, and the half-formed sentence of enquiry from the other, frequently reminding her how differently she had once been noticed and received in society.

One morning Elizabeth and her young companions, fatigued by a walk on the beach, were resting on the rocks. A gentleman in mourning passed them, but turning to examine the expressive countenance of the youngest child, Elizabeth also excited his attention. He exclaimed, "Miss Coventry! am I so happy as once more to be blessed with her presence?" Pleased and gratified to meet with a friend of her former happy days, and who in affluence and poverty had proved a very faithful one; her manner evinced the feelings of her mind, and the conversation which ensued seemed much to shorten the distance of the walk. Mr. Vincent, who was her unexpected companion,

informed her of the death of his grandfather, of the eccentricity of his conduct, of his having asked Vincent's forgiveness just before he died, for having so long deceived him on pecuniary subjects. In short, by that species of infatuation which sometimes warps the human mind, the secret accumulation of wealth had been the solace of the old gentleman's existence, and Vincent was left the uncontrolled master of a very affluent fortune. Elizabeth explained the nature of her situation with Mrs. Matthews, spoke of her mother and Willoughby with affection, and gratefully alluded to Vincent's delicate and friendly conduct; and when they arrived at Mr. Matthews's door, he said, "We part, dear Miss Coventry, to meet again; when—where can I see you?" "My good friend," she replied, "you know my situation in this family, can I with propriety request you to seek me here?"

"Surely the occasional society of a friend, Miss Coventry,—" he hesitated, and at that instant Mrs. Matthews's carriage driving up to the door, rather delayed the parting.

Mrs. Matthews being fully persuaded that Vincent was Elizabeth's brother, requested him, with all her native kindness and hospita-

lity, to walk in, and seeing a degree of hesitation in his manner, she more warmly repeated the invitation, and Vincent, incapable of any decision to refuse the offered courtesy, mechanically followed them into the drawing-room.

Elizabeth, surprized at Mrs. Matthews's earnestness, regarded both her and Vincent in silence; and when the former hoped he would stay and dine, and enjoy a long conversation with Miss Coventry, when she added, that as Mr. Matthews was not at Brighton, she would not offer him a bed, as without a gentleman companion he might find it dull, but that she hoped he would spend as much time with them as was agreeable, and that at all times he should be kindly welcome, Elizabeth was perfectly astonished, and vainly endeavoured to gain an explanation of Mrs. Matthews's peculiar kindness to Mr. Vincent.

Mrs. Matthews, never very accurate in discernment, good-naturedly blamed her for appearing so shy towards her brother; and after praising her as the best little girl in the world, she was hurrying out of the room to leave them, as she said, to enjoy their conversation in comfort. The mystery was now explained, and the loquaciousness of Mrs. Matthews relieved

the confusion of either party. " Well, only think," she continued, " what a mistake I have made! Don't be distressed, my dear Sir, I dare say you are an old acquaintance of Miss Coventry's, and it will be your own fault if you are not soon an acquaintance of mine. You have quite the appearance of a gentleman, and I am sure I have more than once heard Miss Coventry mention all her former friends, and you among the number."

Vincent could boast none of that fashionable effrontery, which so often converts chance occurrences to the promotion of self-interested views; but he soon regained his self-possession, made an appropriate reply to Mrs. Matthews, and with many an appealing look to Elizabeth not to forbid him the house, he took his leave. After this whimsical introduction to the family, Mrs. Matthews could conceive no impropriety in engaging Vincent as an escort to Rottendean, and the adjacent drives, and the native hospitality of her heart always prompted her to press him to dine or to drink tea, as opportunities occurred. Chance also frequently befriended him in meeting Elizabeth when walking with the children, and Vincent was too

happy to anticipate a disappointment of his present hopes and future views.

Mrs. Matthews would sometimes say to Elizabeth, " I am sure, my dear, you will never act any ways indiscreet, why can't you like this young man? Consider how long you have been acquainted, and let me tell you his large fortune is no obstacle to a happy marriage. I declare I am quite taken with him; he really seems to think it worth while to be civil and polite, which is not the case with all young men of large fortune you know."

Elizabeth could only smile at Mrs. Matthews's earnestness, and promise to consider the subject when Mr. Vincent made her an offer; " but indeed, Madam," she continued, " his friendly attentions are only the result of a long and confidential acquaintance with my whole family."

Bathing, and every proper attention to her health, in a short time restored the beauty and clearness of Elizabeth's complexion; but Vincent had neither remarked upon its defect, nor its returning loveliness. Yet unassured that she regarded him with a tenderer interest than friendship, he endeavoured to conceal the ar-

dour of that passion which had " grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength."

As time passed on, the sublime, and the beautiful, alternately engaged their attention; the gloomy splendour of the setting sun—the moon beam rippling on the unruffled ocean, or the majesty of God in storms, rationally exalted their ideas beyond the narrow confines of this lower world; nor did Vincent omit to draw from the rich stores of his own mind all that could assimilate with Elizabeth's on subjects of general knowledge. Mrs. Matthews often invited him, " to talk philosophically," for though she would say, " I cannot understand all his learning, I am sure it amuses you, my dear, and even the children are delighted when he explains all about the telescopes." In Elizabeth's correspondence with her mother, Mr. Vincent's renewed acquaintance was mentioned; he had always been a favourite of Mrs. Coventry's, and his late acquisition of wealth, combined with other reasons, now induced Willoughby to look forward with hope to the probability of his union with Elizabeth.

He had once flattered himself that Donavan regarded her with peculiar interest, and with more kindness than prudence, had very re-

cently written to Elizabeth on the subject. A passage in his letter ran thus, " I know of but one being whose mind appears to be the counterpart of your's; and when we have conversed on happiness, yea, even on domestic happiness, the model of your character has been the basis of that female perfection on which my friend could build his hopes of wedded felicity: I think he has sometimes wished to be perfectly open on the subject, but some untoward circumstance has intervened, and ever deferred the expected confidence."

To this part of one of Willoughby's letters, she answered; " The hints you would convey in regard to your estimable friend, are, I think, the created fancies of your own imagination; a candid confession of my earliest feelings will prove the most satisfactory reply I can now offer. From childhood I ever considered Mr. Donavan as a being infinitely superior to any I then associated with, and his notice of me gave encouragement to every juvenile study, and zest to every seasonable recreation; but from that period I have never received one mark of attachment beyond the bounds of fraternal regard. As I increased in years, should I have been justified to have encouraged a growing

partiality for your friend, to have worshipped the image I myself had placed on the pinnacle of perfection? Concurring circumstances rendered him our constant and welcome inmate, and but for the conviction of his indifference, I perhaps might not so resolutely have disciplined my mind by the controul of reason and reflection. I firmly believe that if in the earliest stages of an unrequited partiality, we attended to the dictates of reason, the victims of hopeless passion would be less frequent; at the same time I scruple not to assert, that were I convinced of the honourable and partial sentiments of a kindred mind; that mutual esteem had cemented the sacred union of our hearts; neither time, nor distance, nor worldly trials could shake my constancy, nor lessen so well-founded an attachment. For one moment reflect on the character of your friend, and say, whether he would so long have veiled his sentiments in mystery, had he ever regarded me with more than friendly esteem; whether, on so momentous a subject, he would have permitted the casual chance of interruption to have impeded any desired confidence. No, my dear brother, your sex is neither bound by custom, by propriety, nor reason to silence,

when explicitness and candour might convert suspense to certainty, and secure the chosen object of regard. It falls to the lot of few of our sex to choose, where inclination, or even where reason would direct, and could the law of propriety or custom be reversed by our making the first election, there are few I believe of your sex but would rather themselves choose, than be chosen, and would attribute an unwarrantable forwardness of conduct in even the most indirect method of making our predilection known. We have indeed the glorious privilege to refuse where we cannot love; and this leads me to answer your enquiries in regard to Mr. Vincent's pretensions."

Elizabeth then states the chance manner of their meeting—speaks of his delicate and friendly conduct—of the liberality and kindness she experiences from Mrs. Matthews—of her own restored health and appearance, and endeavours to tranquillize Willoughby's mind, and intreat him to weigh well some other important subjects of his letter, particularly the good or evil which might accrue from his eastern expedition.

CHAPTER XI.

Willoughby did indeed ponder on the subject with heart-rending anxiety. He frequently consulted Donavan, without the power of resolving to follow his advice, for a new and powerful interest had gained the ascendancy over his better judgment. At first, he had endeavoured to excuse himself from accepting Mr. Onslow's repeated invitations, but various little circumstances had combined to render his society most essential to the recovery of the old gentleman's health and spirits, nor was a game of chess whenever they met a trifling inducement for Mr. Onslow's detaining Willoughby at his house. And soon custom rendered his visits so acceptable, that the former became very often unusually petulant if his favourite long omitted them.

We will not presume to judge whether the "concord of sweet sounds," which Miss Onslow often drew from the harp, or the influence of her bright eyes, which ever and anon glanced at the combatants as she sat apparently en-

gaged in working or reading, induced Willoughby's now punctual and interesting visits, but certain it is, he lost to Mr. Onslow a hard and long fought game at chess, by some such reflection as this; "What are riches, but accidental acquirements—how paltry are the distinctions which they cause in society! virtue we are taught to believe is the true nobility of man, and the mind's equality the most essential consideration." Then the painful retrospect of his past conduct gave such absence and perplexity to his manner, that had not Mr. Onslow been wholly engrossed by his recent victory, he must have noticed Willoughby's perturbation. Ellinor had observed it with something like hope arising in her mind, that her beauty and accomplishments had excited his admiration, for ere this, she had dwelt with romantic enthusiasm on the touching melancholy of his interesting countenance, and attributed his apparent indifference to her all-conquering charms to some prior engagement, or hopeless disappointment; and "oh, my dear Mrs. Randall," (her present companion and ci-devant governess) "Could I only be his friend, the partaker of his sorrow! how envied were my lot," was her repeated exclamation.

On their retiring for the evening, she burst into tears, and said, " Randall, I will never marry my cousin, and ere to-morrow's sun has set, I will open my whole mind to my father. Oh say, is not Willoughby Coventry the most interesting of human beings? Have you not observed how often the heavenly radiance of his eyes, gives way to a languor so melting, so interesting, that I am persuaded—Alas! would it were so, that Ellinor Onslow"—here, overcome with her emotion, Mrs. Randall weakly soothed her romantic companion to peace by palliative consolation, rather than by reasonable exertions; and it was finally agreed that a little more time should elapse before Ellinor's determination was made known to Mr. Onslow.

Willoughby could not but observe the tender interest of Ellinor's manner towards him, and that the music he preferred, and the drawings he praised, were ever sedulously practised and copied. Although he was guarded in his professions, checked by the consciousness of his own situation, and her conditional engagement, he sometimes permitted those various and nameless attentions to escape him, which Ellinor converted to the criterion of his hopeless passion, and she took every opportunity of some

indirect denial of her affections being engaged, to lead him on to a more decisive explanation of his sentiments. Mr. Onslow, satisfied that he had acquainted Willoughby with his nephew's attachment to Ellinor, never imagined there could be any impropriety in the friendly intercourse which seemed to have arisen between them; and provided he had all his usual and daily comforts arranged, could peaceably enjoy his afternoon's nap, and awake to the recreation of a game at chess, he was in constant good humour, and never enquired nor interfered with the disposal of Ellinor's morning hours, nor the nature of her amusements and pursuits. Hence a walk in Kensington Gardens, or a drive to the adjacent villages, generally insured the company of Willoughby, and the weather not permitting, the plea of practising with him some difficult piece of music, or finishing a portrait or drawing, still attached him to the side of the imprudent but beautiful Ellinor.

Mrs. Coventry saw with deep regret that he was probably laying up a store of future misery for himself, that however he might disdain the idea of suffering from an hopeless attachment, she was convinced that Miss Onslow was be-

coming the magnet of attraction, and that the lucrative offer of going to India, and every other pursuit séemed now to be only a secondary consideration. Just at this period Donavan was compelled to pass a few days in town on particular business, and Mrs. Coventry gladly opened her whole mind to him on the subject of Willoughby's present infatuation. This naturally led to a confidential explanation between the friends, nor did Donavan forbear to censure, where his conscience could not approve.

At length Willoughby said; "It is in vain to dissemble, fairy visions of future bliss supersede all prudent resolutions. Donavan, I have met a danger which I can no longer brave; the surpassing loveliness of Ellinor Onslow—the perfect beauty of her form—the fascination of her accomplishments—the innocent partiality which her smiles avow, and the disappointment she cannot conceal when any untoward circumstance hastens my departure from her presence; all conspire to bind me in her chains, as her friend, her admirer, nay, as her grateful and adoring lover."

To this rhapsody, Donavan simply asked, "Whether Miss Onslow had forgotten her early engagements, and by what honourable means

Willoughby had changed the current of her affections; and whether Mr. Onslow sanctioned such apostacy from rectitude and delicacy?"

"Hold! Donavan," he returned, "not even from you can I brook one shadow of blame to asperse the delicacy of an angel's mind."

"And why? because your self-love is flattered—because the radiancy of beauty has dazzled your senses—because you have not the fortitude to stem the torrent of distress and disappointment which Miss Onslow's conduct will spread around. But even granting that a father's disappointment, and an affianced husband's distress might be overcome, on what grounds do you build the future stability of a woman, who can, on so short an acquaintance make a transfer of her affections, and even without your having offered your's in return."

With a flushed cheek and hurried step Willoughby paced the room; Donavan had touched a chord which harmonized not with his feelings, and half mournfully and half resentfully he said,

"We cannot, we ought not to judge for others; this beautiful girl only conditionally promised to be the wife of her cousin, if in two years neither of them changed their mind.

From good authority I know how cool and altered the style of his letters are of late, and I also know her misery would be sealed for life were she compelled to be united to him."

"It is impossible for me to guess on what authority you found this assertion, something is surely due to Mr. Onslow, for his hospitality and kindness, not a total subversion of all his plans for the pecuniary good of his daughter."

"In a mild way you remind me of my poverty, Donavan, which is neither delicate nor friendly. But I boast not of the apathy in which your heart is enshrined; I cannot calculate with the coolness of your reasoning, nor be blind to the partiality of the loveliest girl in creation. Had I in possession all the riches of the East, they should be instantly laid at her feet. Why then should the paltry consideration of her fortune militate against the union of two hearts, which I am convinced have both vainly struggled with the ardency of a pure and unalterable affection. Donavan, you are my best and earliest friend; you have saved me from a thousand follies, yet in this case no argument, no persuasion can induce me to relinquish the hope of securing Miss Onslow's hand. I anticipate your question, yes, I will be perfectly

open and unreserved to her father, and should he consider the engagement binding to her cousin, and refuse his sanction to our love—why, Donavan, then expect the alternative we shall be obliged to adopt. You, who do not feel the power of that attachment which daily strengthens by the bright beam of unrivalled beauty; you who know not what it is to hope and to fear, to live upon a smile, to be depressed by a frown, the willing captive of all that is perfect in woman, cannot comprehend the contrariety of emotions which agitate my bosom. The resolution of my own feelings I can neither comprehend nor reason upon, for well I remember not long ago, I boasted in all the apathy of indifference, that 'man delights not me, nor woman either.'"

"And now," Donavan interrupted, "you are the veriest lover that ever was bewildered in the romantic maze of passion."

We will not venture to assert, whether a chance tête-a-tête with Mrs. Randall had induced Willoughby's unalterable determination, to endeavour to secure Miss Onslow's hand; but certain it is, he had received some very broad and favourable hints of her attachment, with the assurance that the amiable young

lady's private fortune, independent of her father, was very considerable, and many years ago left her by a grandmother.

At the same time, it may reasonably be credited that the perfect beauty of Miss Onslow's face and figure—her fascinating accomplishments, and gentleness of manners, aided by her ill-concealed partiality, had not only overcome Willoughby's lately boasted apathy, but had enslaved his senses, and captivated his better judgment.

In absence, his own former misconduct, his love of play, his careless dereliction of filial and domestic duties, but above all, his poverty stood in dread array before him, and he resolved to fly from the scene of enchantment, and seek in another clime the means of pecuniary emolument, and, by the most exemplary conduct, evince a permanent repentance. But these were short lived resolutions, some look of tender sympathy—a smothered sigh—a song, wherein the melting graces of unrivalled execution, and wherein poetry and sentiment gave effect to harmony; conquered the energetic feelings of his mind; he was again the romantic and enthusiastic lover, and frequently expe-

rienced, that in the presence of the beauteous Ellinor, all sapient resolves were forgotten, and the restrictions of rectitude and prudence losing their boasted influence.

CHAPTER XII.

A FEW mornings after Donavan had left London, Willoughby was surprized to meet him in the street, his pale and agitated countenance avowing that some distressing event had shaken his accustomed fortitude.

Willoughby spoke to him in affectionate terms; Donavan only returned the pressure of his hand, and said, "Accompany me to a neighbouring coffee house, and I will explain the reasons why I am thus so unusually agitated."

Having entered a private room, Donavan threw some letters on the table, and pressing his hand upon his forehead, appeared to be lost in painful reflections. "Speak to me, Donavan, I know you too well not to be assured that your present perturbation arises from no trifling cause."

Donavan recovered himself, and said,

"Willoughby, when last we parted, you may recollect you affirmed, 'that I could not enter into your feelings; that I had never been

the willing captive of all that is perfect in woman,' was your energetic expression. Without farther preamble or comment, I will as briefly as possible give you the history of a heart that has suffered in silence, and is at this moment alive to all the contrariety of feeling which sorrow, joy, and unavailing regrets can give rise to. Have you not often marked in my opinions of women, a peculiarity of sentiment, a sort of severity of judgment, (perhaps erroneously encouraged) but which could only have been the result of irremediable heart-felt disappointment. But I am digressing, where I meant only to narrate. Soon after I had taken holy orders, and was appointed to the curacy of L——, I was requested to attend the sick bed of a lovely young woman. She was the only daughter of a doating father, and it was with difficulty she had persuaded him to permit my attendance, he imagining it a confirmation of her dying state, and he had yet to learn the task of submission to the decree of heaven. Not so the angelic being, whose prayers were joined with mine. Given up by her medical attendants, she knew and felt the state of her soul—the hallowed resignation of her mind, was founded in that true faith which Christianity

alone can inspire, for her hope was fixed upon the ' rock of ages.' In the bloom of youth, blest with a father's love, apparently surrounded with this world's choicest gifts, she had no wish to live; the joys of eternity seemed opening to her view, and her pure and blameless spirit rested on the merits of a Saviour to render her good works and imperfect services acceptable at the throne of grace. One evening, exhausted by painful suffering, she took leave of her father, and requested that I would once more join with her in prayer, but unable to continue the exertion, she begged me to proceed.

" And when I had finished, she said, ' Comfort my poor father, comfort him, Sir, with the blessed hope of the Gospel promises; he will require all you can do for him.' Then extending her dear hand towards me, she added, ' Heaven bless you. I trust we shall meet hereafter.' A succession of fits soon reduced her to such a state of insensibility, that her father, myself, and the attendants, watched by her the whole night, expecting every minute would be her last. Mr. H—— could not bear me out of his sight; we had never met before this melancholy event, and though I could suppose

he had no predilection for my profession, his words of gratitude and esteem were profuse and unbounded.

" Alas! his future conduct—but I will not anticipate.

" After a long and painful struggle, as it were, between life and death, Matilda was raised from the bed of sickness and suffering. Her father could not but have observed the comfort she experienced when our conversation led to serious subjects; the perfect confidence and friendship that subsisted between us. He even encouraged my daily visits, and often declared I was her best physician. And soon, Willoughby, I could not fail to experience what it was ' to live upon a smile'—to be depressed by any returning languor of Matilda's countenance, and to find my every happiness centered, in listening to the mild effusions of her pious mind; in endeavouring to strengthen her faith by a frequent reference to, and explanation of the sacred truths of Scripture. Our growing love thus hallowed by religion, I took an early opportunity to tell Mr. H—— what were my future hopes and expectations. He did not seem surprized, and only said, ' Let my poor little girl be restored to health, and then we

will talk farther on the subject.' 'No, Sir,' I replied, 'I will not deceive you; I sometimes flatter myself our affection may become mutual; and as I have nothing to offer but a heart deeply sensible of your daughter's merit, let this be the hour in which you confirm or discourage my hopes of happiness.'

"He looked thoughtfully, and said, 'Does Matilda know of this application?'

"'On my honour, Sir, she does not, but without the imputation of vanity, allow me to say, the various opportunities you yourself have sanctioned for our friendly intercourse, induce the acknowledgment that she could regard me with partiality, if encouraged by a father's blessing.'

"I then laid before him my present confined prospects, and future expectations: he seemed pleased with my candour, and taking my arm, led the way into Matilda's dressing-room. I might be wrong, deceived in his intentions, but I deemed it a sufficient encouragement to pour forth my whole soul to Matilda, the instant her father had left us together. Oh, Willoughby! can I ever forget the hopes of that moment, when Matilda's eye resting on my agitated countenance, spoke what language could not

utter? At length she said, 'To be your's for ever, Donavan; and with my father's consent! But how little could my whole life repay the tenderness and attentions you have evinced during my illness—the comfort you administered to my soul, when trembling on the verge of an eternal state! May I not say, our attachment is sanctified by an heavenly and an earthly father?'

"From that hour, (I then thought of our temporary separation,) if ever happiness fell to the lot of mortals, we enjoyed it in its fullest extent; and as the pure breeze visited my Matilda's cheek, I hailed with joy the gradual return of the bloom of health, and watched her sometimes varying countenance with all a lover's care. What plans for our future life did we not form! How often was her heart raised to Heaven to enable her to pursue that Christian course, without which all sublunary gifts are of little avail!

"I could only reply, 'Heaven, my own Matilda, will I trust spare us to realize those earthly prospects which at present shine so brightly, because illumined by the pure rays of virtue and religion; for neither virtue nor religion forbid my estimating the blessing of your

invaluable heart, nor looking forward with chastened rapture to that period when we shall be eternally united, and hand in hand endeavour to perform all the practical duties of life.'

"Willoughby, how useless to dwell upon such scenes and sentiments! Matilda's beauty was of the most interesting cast; but it was the soul-inspired countenance, the fervent devotion of her heart, her unostentatious and universal charity, which had daily increased my admiration and esteem, and at length ripened into love, the most fervent and empassioned that could ever agitate the mind of man. A volume would not suffice to repeat our conversations, and describe that tender intercourse which now subsisted between us. One soul seemed to animate our views; and a parsonage, a village-school, and an asylum for the aged poor, generally circumscribed the dear Matilda's future plans. Just at this period I began to fancy that care sat on the brow of her father, and thought the cordiality of his manner a little abated towards me. Whether Matilda entered into these feelings I cannot tell; but she once, on parting for a few hours, said, 'No human power shall now separate us, my dearest friend. Let this ever be our consolation in absence.' And now, as we

thought, a passing cloud only obscured our happiness; Mr. H. declared a journey into the North was inevitable; business of the last importance required his presence; he talked of law-suits and estates, and requested Matilda to arrange all things for their departure as soon as possible. Observing that we looked surprised, and anticipating perhaps our natural regrets to be thus separated, he turned to me and said, 'If we are absent longer than two months, you, Donavan, must come and claim your bride. So cheer up, Matilda, and endeavour on this occasion to play the heroine with success. To-morrow we will renew the subject—this evening I am engaged most particularly.' So saying, he left the room.

"But when shall I dismiss the subject, Coventry, if I repeat all that too faithful memory has treasured here? That evening, what fortitude, what tenderness, did Matilda evince! You must imagine all that could pass in the minds of two persons so attached, so confiding, so beloved!

"We settled the manner of our correspondence: and that I should be summoned, and then permitted to make Matilda my wife, (even on her father's word,) if a few weeks did not bless

me by her return: this was I believe at that instant our mutual comfort.

" But the dreaded hour of our separation arrived! And when the carriage drove up to the door, Matilda sunk into my arms, overpowered by the various emotions of her heart. Aroused by her father's voice, she recovered herself, and said, ' Dearest and best of human beings, farewell!' More she could not utter: and never shall I forget the sweet but saddened look she gave me when the carriage door closed —aye, and closed upon us for ever!

" One treasured letter I received from her— I should rather say a note, only expressive—— but here it is; read it, Willoughby, and then I will finish my sad recital as briefly as possible."

The note ran thus—

" We are just arrived at the end of our journey. Oh, my dearest friend, surely I feel our temporary separation too keenly. Should I not rely on the great Disposer of all events to restore us again to one another in health and safety? I have borne the journey as well as possible; but how have I missed your dear society! I need not say, write to me as often as possible. Your attentions have spoilt me for the world's gene-

ral intercourse. Our's is surely no common attachment—not in the circle of dissipation, not in the career of worldly vanity, did it first take root—on recovering from the awful bed of sickness, in the more immediate presence of our Maker, we registered our vows of everlasting love; nor deem it presumptuous if I say, that angels may have wafted such vows to Heaven! Three words more, and then adieu! or this evening's post will be lost. My father looks ill, and at times is absent and thoughtful; and when I see him thus, I think I could not have staid behind, even for thy dear sake.

"Your's for ever,

"MATILDA H."

"P.S. We arrived here too late to see my grandmother this evening: her age and infirmities compel her early retirement to her own apartment."

"You will soon know the reason, Willoughby, why the above is the only treasured remembrance I have retained of my lost Matilda.

"For some time we continued to correspond with all the energy of hope, and the certainty of

a reciprocal and ardent affection. At length, several posts disappointed my well-grounded expectations. I was not distracted, because I rested on the faith of Matilda; but anxiety conjured up a thousand ills, and my beloved girl again on the bed of sickness, was my daily and my nightly vision! I wrote to her father, and received no answer. I had determined to follow them—my wretchedness would now admit of no alleviation. I came to town to procure a substitute at my curacy; and was answering an advertisement in the newspaper, when my eye caught a paragraph announcing the marriage of a nobleman of high rank with my adored Matilda!

"Conceive, if you can, the state of my mind—the agonizing feelings I endured. It might be a mistake! was a momentary and shallow consolation. Too soon I knew, from undoubted authority, that Matilda had forsaken me—she was the wife of another! Willoughby, her death I could have borne with resignation to the will of Heaven; but to be deceived both by her and her father—to know the apostacy of a heart, wherein I thought dwelt every pure and ennobling sentiment—to know that it could not resist the splendour of wealth, and the high sounding

of an empty title—that Matilda could forget every vow of love, sanctioned by an early, (and as she had so often confessed,) an only attachment——again is the remembrance of past distressing emotions protracting my eventful history, and trespassing on your patience."

"My dear friend, pray proceed," Willoughby could only reply.

"It was at this period that I was seized with a dangerous illness; nor can you fail to remember how anxiously I sought to exchange my curacy, and that before I had settled the business I had the promise of my present living. You may also remember with what an almost uncharitable scrutiny I regarded the character of women in general; and when a young and lovely creature appeared in society with every apparent promise of a sincere and amiable mind—when I heard the voice of truth from lips, and a countenance illumined by beauty's purest ray—I have mentally exclaimed, Such once was my Matilda! Your lovely sister, Willoughby, sometimes looked the counterpart of her whose apostacy I have so sincerely mourned; but whilst my heart bled from even irremediable wounds, I could not in honour seek to gain that interest in a heart which merited the undivided affec-

tions of a kindred mind. There might be too much of romance in my feelings and sentiments——but to proceed :—

" My frequent letters to Mr. H. at length produced a short and unsatisfactory answer; ' that Scotland would henceforth be the place of his abode, and that, all circumstances considered, we had better remain for ever strangers to one another; that unforeseen events, no misconduct on my part, had led to such changes; and concluded with wishing me health and happiness.' And now, Coventry, not to dwell on the state of my own mind; for had I not been supported by a higher power than the mere efforts of human fortitude, the bitterness of such a disappointment could never have been properly subdued—I could never again have mixed in society, and endeavoured to have become one of its useful members."

Donavan took up some papers: pale and agitated, he put them into Willoughby's hand, saying, " I wish now no concealments from my dear and early friends; indeed, as you will hereafter know, I wish most particularly to interest Mrs. Coventry's feelings in my behalf. I will be with you in the evening. To-morrow I

must endeavour to arrange some points, in order to commence a distant journey."

Having taken a hasty refreshment, the friends separated, and Willoughby immediately sought Mrs. Coventry, and briefly informed her of all that Donavan had disclosed. Her kind and maternal heart deeply sympathized in Donavan's story; and the following letter will be its best but melancholy sequel. It was addressed to Donavan, to be delivered after the decease of the Countess of Linden.

" My best and earliest friend! how shall I address thee? how narrate to you those truths which my present situation authorizes me to confess? But whilst life and power are lent me, I feel that I must retrace facts, rather than give way to the feelings which oppress me. You must recollect our mutual observation on the abstraction of my poor father's mind. Alas! it soon so fatally increased, that I became on his account unspeakably wretched; and the frequent and private conferences between him and my grandmother gave me some vague apprehensions of evil, though, as I then thought, without any real foundation. She was a woman in

whose mind the pride of birth overpowered all softer feelings; and when she was apprized of my engagement with you, her indignation was boundless, and her pecuniary threats most important to my father. I will not, I cannot repeat all I endured at this period; and yet it was only the prelude to greater suffering. My last letters to you were suppressed; and many of your's, I believe, never reached me. I will not, if possible, digress. Unfortunately, I was particularly distinguished by a friend and favourite of my grandmother's, Lord Linden; and too soon proposals of marriage were offered to my father on my account. Oh, Donavan, how did your precepts and example here support me! With a bended knee and uplifted heart did I lay my cause before the tribunal of Heaven; and I resolved that no human power should shake my faith in your love, nor compel me to break my own vows of constancy and affection. Lord Linden was my aversion; but I was compelled to hear the avowal of his passion. I frankly told him I had not a heart to bestow. 'He would trust to time and assiduity to gain such a portion of my esteem as would ensure his future felicity;' and other common-place and unfeeling arguments were the answers I

received. To turn him from his purpose, I judged was impracticable. I supplicated my grandmother in all the pathos of despair. I described the scenes you and I had gone through —I spoke of you as you merited! At her age, all this appeared only the language of romance. I talked of the heart's best affections, and she answered in the language of family pride and worldly prospects. With my father I had still a harder task: he neither commanded nor threatened; but he almost knelt to his obdurate child, as he termed me, to save him from ruin. Long and severe were the conflicts I endured—I fled from my father's presence when I felt overcome by his distress. Lord Linden seemed to await the decision with the patient certainty of ultimate success—sometimes endeavouring to dazzle my senses with the tinselled pageantry of wealth and titles, and sometimes pretending to imagine I only required time to give my unqualified consent. My father's expression, 'to save him from ruin,' ever dwelt on my mind. I had, alas! long suspected his gambling propensity; but I knew not then the extent of his wretchedness. One fatal day, Lord Linden had been more than usually earnest in the cause, and my refusal more decisive;

he left me with these memorable words, 'Take care, Madam, that you are not laying up for yourself years of repentance.' My father and he were closeted together for some time; and, soon after, the former came into my dressing-room. He found me bathed in tears. He took me in his arms, and after holding me for some minutes in silence, he said, 'Matilda, I am come to take a long farewell. You alone could save me from temporal and eternal ruin; but as I despair to conquer your prejudices, I yield to your firmness. Be happy, when I am gone, in the arms of Donavan.'

"'My father! what mean you? In mercy explain. Oh! leave me not thus.' I held him with all my strength. 'How am I accessary to your dreadful ruin?'

"He burst into tears; and I soon drew from him those truths which sealed our mutual misery, Donavan. Suffice it here to say, that a continued succession of ill luck at the gaming-table had not only ruined his own fortune, but had involved his mother's also; that Lord Linden had been both in town and Scotland his successful adversary; that the journey to Scotland was taken in the hope of compromising

matters; and that, too fatally, Lord Linden's newly-awakened partiality, or rather the selfishness and madness of his passion for me—in short, our union was to be the price of my father's liberation from such disgraceful debts. You will imagine my grandmother was only swayed in her obstinate adherence to Lord Linden's suit, by mistaken but worldly motives: whatever were the causes, behold now your lost Matilda, the wretched and devoted victim.

"My father, in all the calmness of despair, again urged me to decide his fate. How cruel was his kindness! Oh, Donavan, with your dear image in my heart—with your last look indelibly impressed on my memory—I frantically exclaimed, 'If to become Lord Linden's wife will save my father!' Instantly recollecting the horrors of the dreadful sacrifice, I said, 'But why, my father, cannot we bear poverty together? I fear it not.'

"'Matilda, once more, I dread disgrace, not poverty. I urge you not—and here we part for ever!'

"My last struggle was made—and again forcibly detaining my poor father, I added, 'Tell Lord Linden I will become his wife.'

" ' It is enough,' he answered. ' Endeavour to compose yourself, my poor girl. When will you confirm it to Lord Linden?'

" ' Lead me instantly to him,' I replied; but overpowered with such a contrariety of emotions, I fainted in my father's arms.

" I awoke to sensibility and wretchedness, and found my grandmother bending over my couch in anxious solicitude for my recovery. I bore in silence all her garrulous remarks and congratulations; and, in a few hours, received Lord Linden as my destined husband. I could not destroy your letters and miniature; but I sealed them up, and determined to see them no more. What would you think? what would you feel? were the constant and agonizing questions of my mind. And I then imagined you would bear the stroke with greater firmness, if I avowed that I married Lord Linden with my own consent. I have reason to believe my few incoherent lines never reached you—my father purposely suppressed them. So well did I know every feeling and sentiment of your heart, that I felt convinced you would sooner conquer your grief and disappointment, to think I was not forced into this hated marriage; but that titles and splendour had warped my mind, and ren-

dered me unworthy of your disinterested regard: and I almost hoped that death would soon permit a full elucidation of all my trials. I must pass over in silence the horrors of my bridal day! Equipages of state, costly attire, and jewels as expensive as money could purchase, appeared only to me as the trappings of woe. Lord Linden was in raptures with the admiration they excited; and when this wretched and devoted form was the subject of praise from the adulating flattery of the world, his jealous fondness, if I may so term it, oppressed and disquieted my heart almost beyond endurance. For a few months I went through this mockery of peace; but at length my health and spirits gave way, and change of air was, ah! how fallaciously, recommended by my medical attendants.

"See me now taking possession of an almost princely abode, if size and gothic magnificence could render it so. I seemed to breathe more freely, as I inhaled the spring's refreshing breeze, and began to form some plans which might essentially benefit the neighbouring poor; but, alas! here was I foiled. I was given to understand, 'that it was derogatory to my rank to visit the sick and afflicted; that the whole sur-

rounding poor were an ungrateful set, and that schools of instruction only encouraged presumption; that ignorance was the ordained lot of half the world, and that all innovation led to dangerous equality in the ranks of men.'

" Just as my poor grandmother was preparing, notwithstanding her age and infirmities, to visit us, to witness my splendid misery, she was suddenly released from this mortal state, and died ignorant of my father's errors. The suddenness of her dissolution, she having fallen out of her chair when they were conversing together, affected him most sensibly; and I had soon the misery of hearing that a paralytic attack had rendered him most imbecile both in mind and body. Not doubting Lord Linden's acquiescence, I requested to go to my father. A peremptory refusal preceded hours, and days, and weeks, of wretched altercation. Lord Linden was becoming a jealous tyrant: he could not bear me out of his sight—had imbibed the idea that my ill health and spirits were caused by that prior attachment which in the days of his persecution I had avowed—and I was given to understand that Linden Castle was to be my only place of abode. I will not dwell on the thousand meannesses he practised, nor the sus-

picions of his ungenerous mind. His conduct degenerated into brutal and unmanly treatment, far easier however to endure, than the occasional fondness and caresses he sometimes lavished on his victim.

"Time passed on; and trusting to the great Disposer of all events to temper my mind to each inflicted trial, I became more tranquil and resigned. That I had acted from the impulse of filial duty, that I had perhaps saved my father from eternal ruin, was one cordial drop in the bitter cup of life; and when your dear image would obtrude in every mental struggle, I endeavoured to say, 'Thy will be done, oh Heaven!' To that Heaven I offered up one short prayer at the close of every day, that you might gain that 'peace which the world could neither give nor take;' and as I felt it sprung from the purity of devotion, not from criminal regrets, I trusted that the 'recording angel' would enrol it in that pious memorial, which must prove hereafter to be our own awful tribunal.

"My dearest friend, how frequently have I blamed my self-presumption, when I said, 'no human power should separate us.' How little can short-sighted mortals, creatures of an hour,

look into future events! But I am weak and wearied, and have yet a trying subject to pursue. I have written at intervals; and, dear Donavan, before this reaches you, I trust I shall be eternally at peace.

"I will not dwell on the capricious conduct of Lord Linden: he now became a fox-hunter, and associated with the noisy and the vulgar, frequently drowning his understanding and intellects in the noisy revels of intemperance. A few days before my confinement, Lord Linden was brought home senseless: an unmanageable horse, in the ardour of the chace, flung his unfortunate rider, and he never spoke again!

"Oh, Donavan! there is something so awful in death! there is something so appalling in the thought of a fellow-creature being suddenly called to eternal judgment, that you will not wonder when I say the agitation I experienced was such as no language can express; but its effects will, I prophetically avow, be fatal to me, or my unborn infant.

"My father was immediately apprized of the event. Alas! he was in so wretched a state of debility, that he could neither act nor write in return: he too fatally had bitterly repented being accessary to my unhappy fate.

" Lord Linden has unexpectedly evinced his good opinion of me in a codicil annexed to his will; wherein he nominates me to choose a guardian, should his child live. I am almost happy to think I can entrust the little hapless being to your charge. All things are arranged, should I not be spared, that you may immediately claim the infant. Should I live!—Away with the thought—it cannot be. Donavan, you have often mentioned, in our happier days, the respected friends of your early youth; and would Mrs. Coventry afford her fostering care during the infancy of my child? ' If departed spirits are permitted to review this world,' mine may hereafter be sensible of her goodness—the delegated but invisible witness of such earthly charity! Pecuniary arrangements are made with an unsparing hand: on this subject, facts and memorials will speak with more delicacy and satisfaction than words. There will be no inconvenience, nor intercourse necessary with Lord Linden's family. In default of a lineal heir, the successor is of a very distant branch; nor has any cordiality subsisted from family connection or relationship for many years past.

" You will probably know, before this reaches you, that these are my early days of widow-

hood. What different emotions will rend your soul! For hitherto I must be considered by you as an apostate from all that is decorous and faithful in woman; but when you mourn my loss, and feel the sacrifices I have been compelled to make, you will think of me as your once, nay, your ever dear Matilda!—

"And now worldly subjects are almost for ever closed, human pride is humbled, and my spirit broken by affliction; yet strong in faith, it rests on the merits of my Redeemer to gain the 'resurrection of the just to eternal life.'—

"There is however one more tie which binds my thoughts to earth—the pitiable state of my poor father. I am too truly informed, nay, since I began this paper, that deep and unavailing repentance for his past conduct, and remorse for having made me the sacrifice of his imprudences, have so unsettled his intellects, that it is thought his mind will never regain its usual tone. Donavan, I can make you no request on this subject—you will act like a Christian.—

"One thing more: if Heaven, in its mercy, should yet spare me to watch over the infant years of my child, you will simply receive a note with the promise of a future explanation of my conduct at the expiration of my year of widow-

hood, joined to a vow, sacred as sincere, not to see you till that period has elapsed.

"Several fainting fits have so weakened this sinking frame, that I can no longer defer to finish my heart-rending task—this sinking frame, which may soon be refined from all seeds of weakness and decay, and eventually re-united to the immortal spirit.

"My ever dear friend, I humbly trust we shall meet in heaven! Let this be your present consolation and your future hope. I need not say, love my child, and endeavour to instil into his mind every religious and virtuous principle.

"I am wonderfully composed. The devout aspirations which direct my soul to the throne of grace, seem to inspire me with new strength. The awful responsibility of this hour brings with it no agonizing terror, because faith opens the view of immortality!

"I need not say, cherish my memory;—but the word farewell must be pronounced!

"Your's eternally,

"MATILDA ——."

From a note annexed to the mournful letter, it was stated by Lady Linden's principal attendant, that she lived to give birth to a male

infant, and in a few hours sunk from extreme debility—that she had suffered as little as possible; and, after fondly blessing the child, she expired without a struggle—that it was her wish, immediately after the funeral, this packet should be forwarded as directed, and the infant in readiness to be removed according to her will.

Mrs. Coventry willingly promised every care and protection for the little orphan; and as her plans and residence were rather uncertain on Elizabeth's account, the trusty Mrs. Mansel, the respected housekeeper who followed them in their poverty, arranged a nursery for the reception of the young lord in the house they then inhabited. Donavan's feelings may be better imagined than described: his calmness was more affecting than all the violence of uncontrolled distress; and to know that the mind on which he had once rested in perfect faith of every feminine virtue, had never swerved from all that was amiable in woman, so changed the current of his regrets, that he almost found "there was joy in grief;" because he no longer mourned the loss of a capricious and erring being, but of one whom he devoutly hoped was receiving the reward of a heart-rending

filial sacrifice. There were however periods when the vain regrets of mortality would disturb even his well-regulated and disciplined mind. Matilda's sacrifice, her sufferings, her early dissolution in all the brilliancy of youthful beauty; the reverse of their mutual fate; the years of happiness they might have enjoyed together, but for the misconduct of one individual; all stood in dread array, and, but for that never-failing consolation which the Christian derives from religion, Donavan could not have endured with fortitude either past or present trials. It is surely the trials both of prosperity and adversity that mark the man "whose conversation is in heaven:" he knows that where affliction is awarded, fatal will be the consequences to fall short of that standard by which the Almighty tries the moderation and obedience of his creatures.

CHAPTER XIII.

The time was approaching for Elizabeth to return with Mrs. Matthews from Brighton, and not without a thousand regrets from her kind and well-meaning hostess, that in London she should be obliged to give up Miss Coventry's constant society. Mr. Vincent's attentions and rational conduct were gaining fast on Elizabeth's esteem, and on his occasional absence, she was almost surprized to feel what a blank the day appeared that was not cheered by his society. He had just made her a frank and unequivocal offer of his heart and fortune, as she received a packet from her mother, inclosing Donavan's recital and letter. The account did indeed "beguile her of her tears;" and on Vincent's finding her in such apparent distress, she informed him of the contents of the packet. "Be it ever my care, dearest Elizabeth, to cheer your mind to peace under the pressure of distressing feelings. Donavan is a noble fellow; and how shall I avow, that I was once

narrow minded enough to dread that a mutual partiality might subsist between you."

Elizabeth had just referred Mr. Vincent's offer to her mother, and confessed her regard, for Mr. Donavan had never exceeded that sisterly affection which their domestic intercourse had given rise to; that he always had appeared labouring under some perplexity or tender disappointment, and with a blush, assured her enraptured lover, that her heart and hand should never be separated.

The next day Vincent set off for London to see Mrs. Coventry and Willoughby, and immediately returned to Brighton, to escort Mrs. Matthews and family to town in the following week.

Mrs. Coventry could not but be sensible of the eligibility of Mr. Vincent's offer, and was so well convinced of Elizabeth's principles, that she felt assured nothing but a real regard on her part would have made her consent to the union.

The two following letters will describe their mutual feelings and sentiments.

" TO MRS. COVENTRY.

" My dearest Mother,

" Never did I regret my absence from you as I do at this period, accustomed as I have ever been to confide my whole heart to your affectionate bosom, I may well be excused, if at this momentous period I am too impatient for the short time to elapse, ere we can possibly meet. Even before I touch upon a subject, and of which you have been apprized by Mr. Vincent, let me endeavour to express my sympathy for Mr. Donavan's present arduous trial. What a suffering angel was his Matilda! Methinks I could talk to him with all a sister's tenderness; and shall it not be, dearest mother, our mutual endeavour to tranquillize his mind, and by acting as a mother and sister towards his infant charge, relieve him from much tender inquietude, and see him by degrees regain a peaceful and truly resigned spirit. We are almost tempted to say, why are such hearts disunited? but as this must lead to the presumption of questioning the decrees of Providence, the silence of Christian submission should be the practical duty of the afflicted. Donavan will regain cheerfulness and peace; the duties of his pro-

fession—the interest he will feel for Matilda's infant, and the strong sense of his own superior mind, will guard him from that sickly sensibility of disappointment, which might tend to lessen the zeal he has hitherto manifested for the good of others, and render him, what he has never yet been, an inactive and useless member of society.

" My dearest mother, I anticipate all your maternal feelings on my account, all your anxiety lest I have too hastily referred Mr. Vincent to you. My heart shall be open as the day to your inspection, this important period of my life is not the time to have one unworthy concealment. I well know you once thought that a decided preference for Mr. Donavan rendered me indifferent to the attention of others; I well know also Willoughby's wishes and sentiments in regard to his friend, and I would refer you to some letters which occasionally past between us, wherein Willoughby spoke, perhaps, more according to his wishes than the suggestions of prudence. I will candidly own, that at a very early period of my life, when Donavan appeared like one of our family, I could easily have been led to the sincerest attachment for him, had I fancied on his

part any growing partiality, at least a partiality beyond fraternal regard. But my reason told me I had nothing to hope beyond a brother's love, and after a few struggles with my own heart, I conquered its juvenile and very girlish prepossession. Had Donavan paid me even those silent and nameless attentions which situated, as we were, he might easily have done, the case would perhaps have been otherwise, I might have lived upon hope, however my reason taught me to despair: but his conduct has ever been the soul of honour and estimable beyond my power to express. My rejection of Mr. Trelawny's addresses was decided, both on account of his religious principles, and from the conviction that it was only the 'tincture of a skin that he admired,' for had he proved every way amiable, I think I could easily have been led to a deeper interest in the proposals he condescended to offer. I have seen him, but more of him by and by. I must proceed;

"Of Mr. Vincent I ever entertained the highest opinion; yet there was a time when I truly regretted the evident partiality of his manner, and had he then made me an offer, I think I should without hesitation have refused it. I am now putting fortune and worldly

advantages entirely out of the question, I am speaking only of the heart and affections.

" The affliction and trials we, my dearest mother, were soon called upon to endure, seemed to strengthen my mind against all other impressions, and to live and die only in your dear presence, appeared to be as much my inclination as my duty. You may remember the conversations we have had on this subject, wherein you wished to convince me of some erroneous opinions I had imbibed, and with a disinterestedness worthy of yourself, pointed out the various important duties a woman should perform, the wide channel by which her professions of religion might be practically illustrated by her union with a man of worth and sense. At that time, I confess, I did not think quite as you did, but candour obliges me now to acknowledge, that the constancy, the delicacy and tenderness of Mr. Vincent's regard—his liberal sentiments on every subject—his well-informed mind, and pleasing manners; above all, his religious opinions, founded on the only true basis, have so increased my predilection in his favour, and riveted my esteem and confidence, that our union, I humbly trust, will neither endanger my temporal nor eternal happiness.

" Mr. Vincent, anticipating my sentiments in regard to you, my dearest mother, has marked out many plans for our future happiness and comfort.

" ' We must not be separated from Mrs. Coventry,' he has more than once repeated; and when my spirits are subdued in recurring to past events, when your maternal tenderness is our mutual theme, he speaks as if indeed he were your son, nor is hurt or offended when I declare, that your happiness and comfort will ever be my anxious concern. Dearest mother, do not make scruples nor objections to live under the same roof with us. Frederick says, he is well aware, that generally speaking, this plan may not be a wise one, but knowing you as he does, he is convinced no interference on either side will make either party less independent. Oh! how anxious I am about Willoughby, impatient of controul, uncertain in projects, and liable to be seduced from the exact line of right by the ardency of his feelings, years of repentance may follow these halcyon days of fancied attachment; but I will not anticipate evil, perhaps I have yet to learn more favourable news on this subject.

" I cannot say too much of Mrs. Matthews's

kindness and consideration; were I her own child she could scarcely be more rejoiced at my present prospects, nor is the recovery of my complexion a trifling source of her constant congratulation. This leads me to mention my chance meetings with Mr. Trelawny. I had heard of his marriage with a lady of large fortune, that a few weeks had settled the contract, and was given to understand that some people married in haste, and repented at leisure.

" One morning, as we were alighting from the carriage after our usual drive, Mr. Trelawny past on horseback; he appeared surprized to find I looked myself again—contemplated our elegant carriage and respectable appointment, and with one of his graceful bows rode on.

" The next day I was with the children on the beach; their female servant had advanced with them a few paces in order to seek for shells in a neighbouring rock, I was watching their progress, when my name hastily pronounced, induced me to turn, and Mr. Trelawny was at my side. After some fine turned compliments, he requested to know if he might still address me by the name of Coventry, the carriage, &c.

had led him I suppose to believe I had changed my situation; that he should have much pleasure in introducing me to Mrs. Trelawny—that he must not look back to former times, or he should offend me by the vain repentance he might express of his former conduct—that he was now convinced I alone could have made him happy. Seeing I looked indignant, he added, 'Be not offended, I am sufficiently punished.'

"I must interrupt you, Sir, to say, 'that I have indeed changed my situation, I am governess to those children,' pointing to the little ramblers, and bowing as I retired.

"'One moment, loveliest of all created beings, only while I say, may happiness attend you! and should I not have a proper opportunity of introducing you to Mrs. Trelawny——'

"'I understand you, Sir;' for I plainly perceived that my dependent situation caused an alteration in his manner—'henceforth then we shall be strangers. To keep up my character for serious admonition, I would advise you at least to be contented with the splendid lot you have chosen.' I had walked towards the children, and we parted in mutual displeasure. To finish, I hope for ever, this account of

Mr. Trelawny, in a day or two we met him on the Marine Parade, walking with his lady; a vacant stare, and then an averted look proclaimed he either feared to speak to me before her, or that he had, as I wished him to do, dropped the acquaintance for ever. I was right in my first conjecture, at such a place as this, every one must meet continually, and Mr. Trelawny seeing the carriage at the Chalybeate, which is one of our constant drives on account of the children, he accosted me, beginning to apologize for his apparent rudeness in not appearing to know me when last we met, that 'he could explain, would I allow him a few minutes conversation, Mrs. Trelawny had very singular notions, and ——'

"'I can only repeat, Sir,' hastily interrupting him, 'Henceforth we are strangers,' and desiring the servant to open the carriage door, left him to his own reflections.

"Had my fate ever been united with this man of the world, this man of affected independence, what a miserable being should I have been! The report is, that his lady is a slave to fashion, and to the opinion of the world—that she was captivated by Mr. Trelawny's pleasing exterior, and that they are indeed 'paired, not

matched:' that he despises the weakness of her intellect, and finds his best society from home, and that her house is ever a scene of dissipated confusion: that her jealous and ill-timed reproaches are leading him to break through the slavery of her growing government, and that probably a separation will eventually ensue.

"Oh! my dear mother, marriage is surely a very awful event in the life of woman! How is it that so many of our sex engage without fear in that lottery, where a blank may prove the ruin of their future peace?

"Let me hear from you—tell me if all that I have referred to you, meets with your approbation. My heart should sooner break than give one unnecessary pang to your's. Above all, admonish me by your experience, and console me by your tenderness, and believe me now and ever,

"Your dutiful and

"Affectionate daughter,

"ELIZABETH COVENTRY."

" TO MISS COVENTRY.

" I have just received your most welcome letter, and I will not an hour defer to converse with my dear child on the various subjects her pen has led to. The interest we all take in Donavan's concerns induces me first to tell you that he is set off for the North, and will return as soon as possible with the infant, &c. and that all things are arranged for my care and reception of it. Donavan bears up under this trial like a man and a Christian; he speaks as little as possible of the melancholy event, but I fear he must go through some scenes which will touch him nearly, for I cannot help imagining that he means to know the real situation of Matilda's father, and if considered to be unconscious of any new shock, to have a personal interview with him, and to order all things for his future comfort in regard to pecuniary circumstances. Thus following the example of his heavenly Teacher, endeavouring ' to return good for evil.'

" And now, my dearest Elizabeth, so well do I know the sincerity of the heart, it has been the business of my life to form to all I considered good and virtuous, that your acceptance of Mr. Vincent's addresses are a convincing

proof that your early prepossession in Donavan's favour had never romantically increased. It was natural that you should like him as you did, and it was consonant to your feelings and character, that you should have suppressed an unrequited partiality; at the same time, a mother's anxiety induces me to request, that if more time and examination be now necessary for your future peace, you will not deceive yourself and others. Vincent deserves a heart without one reserve, without one drawback to that reciprocal confidence which is the permanent basis of conjugal affection. Long had I marked his silent but unobtrusive regard, when dependence chained his will, and honourably forbad a disclosure of his growing attachment. And perhaps as good sometimes proceeds from what we call evil, the confined and sedentary habits which from the age and caprice of his mistaken relative, he was compelled to adopt, may have been the means of much intellectual improvement. In once more recurring to Donavan, I will only say, that though I am no advocate for the impressions of first love being indelible, and romantically leading to vows of everlasting constancy, when the object is lost in this world for ever, yet I think in Mr. Donavan's case,

years may elapse before he can offer to another that regard and affection which alone can render a delicate and sensible woman permanently happy.

" Natural as it is, my dearest Elizabeth, for a lover to speak in high and energetic terms of the woman he has chosen; yet even a mother's partiality cannot but be flattered at the affectionate sentiments and liberal proposals Mr. Vincent has expressed, and offered on this important and interesting subject. His opinion of you is not the opinion of an hour; and though I agree with you that marriage is an awful event, I think the reason is obvious why there are so many unhappy matches, even where ' music and song had waked the bridal day,' where friends and fortune seemed to smile on every opening prospect. In the higher ranks, interest has perhaps persuaded the inexperienced parties that happiness consists in the increase of state, of dignified titles, and worldly splendour. Where there is no mind, there can be no permanent attachment, and hapless indeed is that woman's fate which is united to a man whose intellects can neither improve, nor enjoy the social and domestic hour. That I was a happy wife, my dearest Elizabeth, is

well convinced of. The tear of fond regret for the loss of such a husband is too often selfishly shed, and but for the interest I experience for you and Willoughby, I fear I should too impatiently wish to follow my friend beloved ' to realms of everlasting peace.'

" From your union with Mr. Vincent, what rational and permanent happiness may be expected; happiness, as far as is consistent with our present state, for none can imagine that prosperity can ever ward off those earthly trials, common to all sorts and conditions of life. Sickness, loss of friends, of children, or of fortune, are trials the happiest are often called upon to endure, and ' It is good for me that I have been in trouble,' is a confession applicable both to the peasant and the prince. It is not always however that serious trials are exclusively the sources of domestic unhappiness. Infirmities of temper—want of order and regularity in our daily habits—misapprehension of a husband's wishes or intentions—an encouragement of that morbid sensibility which renders the mind incapable of practical fortitude, either on any sudden emergency, or in the common occurrences of life; a too sedulous attention to trifles, or a total neglect of them,

and of those little attentions which speak the interest we feel for the comfort of those we love, all may eventually contribute to weaken esteem, or to estrange affection.

" Let my experience suggest, dearest Elizabeth, that a wife should always endeavour to render herself both useful and agreeable to her husband, and be assured that a man of sense will know how to estimate such an unceasing desire to please, and on any occasional separation doubly feel the value of every affectionate solicitude. You well know my opinion of an unreserved confidence between man and wife, and that without it, apathy or indifference would probably succeed the most rapturous attachment. It is in fact the stable foundation of every species of friendship; but it should never degenerate into those trivial and oft repeated communications, which irritate and harass even the most indulgent hearer.

" Want of discrimination or judgment is the wreck of much domestic comfort; the fondest expressions, and the tenderest reproaches may be ill-timed; raillery may be unseasonable, and serious questions and remarks unnoticed in a gay convivial hour: but how would a little common sense and observation prevent these

errors! how might a woman escape a variety of unpleasant feelings, by not subjecting herself to the hasty reply, or the contemptuous silence of a really attached husband. In these days of frivolity and dissipation, where the domestic tête-a-tête is often considered insipid, and variety of amusement the grand pursuit of life, the general admonition would be, 'Sacrifice not your time and comfort to such an unsatisfactory mode of existence;' but, my dearest child, such admonition will not apply to you. I even fear from your retired habits, your own perfect enjoyment of domestic pursuits; you may feel disinclined to promote that occasional variety, which every man, almost without exception, is inclined to partake of. Time and experience, and your own excellent understanding, will give force to this gentle hint, and under all existing circumstances, your judgment I trust will discriminate. That no woman can love her husband too well, is an unquestionable assertion; but there is a restless inquietude of manner for his health and safety, and where there is no probable chance of their being endangered, or a sort of accusing fondness for some fancied neglect, or hasty expression, which cannot always be endured with complacency,

and may on his part lead to impatience, if not to dissatisfaction.

" I have seen a blameable inattention to the neatness of apparel, weaken that delicacy of regard which is the bond of married life. Country retirement, or chiefly living within the domestic circle, frequently precludes that attention to dress, which unconsciously commands respect, and pays a proper compliment to those with whom we daily associate. But, Elizabeth, I am losing myself on an endless and interesting subject; who but a mother can feel a mother's anxiety for a much-loved daughter's happiness, when she is about to leave the paternal roof, and take upon herself the responsibility of new and interesting characters! When she is about to realize the hopes of maternal affection, and reward or disappoint the work of many years of solicitude.

" The best security that such hopes will not be frustrated, is her union with a man of sound religious principles, one, who whilst he becomes her earthly support, by example and precept strengthens her faith in the promises of a future state of eternal and unchangeable happiness.

" That both Vincent and yourself will act consistently with your Christian character there

is no reason to doubt, and however pleasing are my anticipations—however gratifying it might be constantly to witness your domestic happiness, I must decidedly refuse your united affectionate request to reside wholly under your roof. There are so many obvious reasons against it, that I trust a little conversation on the subject, will soon convince you of the wisdom of my determination. Besides the arrangement I have made with Mr. Donavan also militates against your present favourite plan. Be assured, my ever dear Elizabeth, that our separation in every point of view will be wise, and will imperceptibly lose its bitterness.

" I am perplexed and uneasy about Willoughby; he is either thoughtful and abstracted, or so unusually elated in spirits, that I scarcely know how to seek his confidence. He passes much of his time with the Onslows, and he seems to waver in the resolution he had formed of accepting the offer of going to India. This plan you well know I can never urge, though I hope if his welfare were essentially concerned, I should have sufficient fortitude not to oppose it; but you are coming home, my dearest girl, and Willoughby may be induced to confide to you the secret that oppresses him.

" Pray assure Mrs. Matthews of my gratitude and esteem for her kindness to you. I can easily understand her character, and that she possesses that native goodness of heart, which prosperity cannot lessen, nor indulgence check.

" Mr. Trelawny's hasty marriage does not seem to promise much happiness; I heard the other day, from good authority, that the lady prides herself on her birth and large fortune, and, that unused to controul, her temper is violent and unmanageable. I once hoped better things of Mr. Trelawny: how could I ever think him worthy of you! I believe I was influenced by your dear father, who was really partial to him, and as it has proved, deceived in his character and conduct. That I have the hope of seeing you so soon, is indeed a cordial drop in the altered cup of life. My affectionate blessing is your's.

" E. Coventry."

CHAPTER XIV.

At the time appointed, Elizabeth was again restored to her affectionate mother. The meeting was peculiarly interesting to both; and some time elapsed before they could calmly and rationally converse on past and future events. At length it was agreed that the time of her union with Vincent, and some future arrangements, should not be finally settled till Donavan's arrival from the North. He had written, but only in a concise manner, to Willoughby: harassed by fatigue of mind and body, he wished to defer particular communications till his return, which from a variety of circumstances could not be precisely ascertained.

Willoughby had felt, and did feel, for the trials of his friend; but he could not forbear imagining how much misery had been escaped, if he had at once sealed his fate by a private union with his beloved and attached Matilda.

He adhered to every sophistical argument to persuade himself that reason would sanction his union with Miss Onslow, and that it were better

to marry her without, than against the consent of her father. Hence arose many lover-like altercations on the subject; and it was at length agreed that Ellinor should make the long premeditated confession to her father, "that she would never be united to her cousin." And soon the wished-for opportunity offered, by Mr. Onslow asking "if she had lately heard from him;" and in a more jocose style adding, "I must lay aside all gouty complaints on your wedding-day, even if I do not lead off the first dance." Ellinor appeared much agitated. He continued, "I do not wonder, my dear girl, at the tremulous state of your mind; but remember that Edward is no new acquaintance. You may look up to him with all that confidence and affection which the most romantic can anticipate, and on which the most rational can build their hopes of happiness."

"You asked me, Sir, if I had received a letter from Edward: here is one"—putting it into his hand. It ran thus—

"That you were beloved by me with the fondest affection, I refer you, Ellinor, to former times and former scenes. You act from mis-

taken principles; and no earthly consideration should now tempt me to unite your fate with mine. Your father—— but I will not say all my heart would dictate. Were I inclined to be severe, I could add, I can little envy the present object of your regard, from the conviction that he will one day be convinced of your erroneous principles and conduct. You are free as air, Ellinor—take back all your vows of everlasting love—not for the wealth of both the Indies would I become your husband! Be happy if you can; and I need not say, forget that such a being is in existence as

"Edward Onslow."

Mr. Onslow's surprize and indignation were great on perusing so extraordinary a letter.

Tremulous with rage, he said, "And you, Ellinor, have dared to trifle with the affections of Edward Onslow! Mark me, and tremble at my denunciations. May all——"

Ellinor had prepared every argument in favour of the mind's independency—of the free will of creatures to choose or to reject, as existing circumstances might determine; and had even studied the characters of those modern

heroines who contrive to limit the bounds of filial obedience, agreeably to their own ideas of right and wrong—who term obstinacy fortitude; and caprice, the result of truth's sublimest dictates. But shocked to witness her father's paroxysm of passion, she first essayed to calm its fury by every blandishment which she full well knew how to practise; and she even determined to act rather without her father's consent, than against it.

"My father!" she franticly exclaimed, "your malediction would kill me; in pity be more calm, and hear the pleadings of reason."

"Who is the wretch that has poisoned your mind with such delusive principles?"

"Oh, my father! pity the feelings of a too susceptible heart. Who can answer for its changes? What can ensure felicity in the married state but that sacred intercourse of soul, so often profaned by interest, by indifference, or convenience!"

The moment of passion had passed; but Mr. Onslow, provoked beyond endurance by the senseless jargon of his daughter, interrupted her and said—

"Am I to understand, Ellinor, that you have

transferred your affections to another? and outraging all feminine decorum, you have yourself proved false to an engagement ratified before Heaven and me?"

"Only a conditional engagement, Sir: and feelings founded on prejudice must be erroneous. Besides, truth obliges me to declare, that where there is not a mutual relationship of mind—where the same spirit of truth does not disseminate the same principles and ideas—we should disdain the trammels of human laws, and assert the native freedom of our will."

"Grant me patience! Oh, Ellinor, is this a father's reward? Far happier had you died in your cradle, than lived to this day's disgrace! That I should exist to call you an unprincipled girl."

With a smile she replied, "My misery would indeed be complete, did I merit the reproaches of such a father! To love virtue, cannot deserve the imputation of guilt."

"Whilst I have patience, tell me the name of this your mind's seducer."

"Justice, Sir, obliges me to say, that the being on whom my fate depends is the very soul of honour; that I solemnly believe, had he not discovered my awakened partiality, he

would have fed in silence on the passion which consumed him.

' Not loving first, but loving wrong is shame.'"

" Absurd, romantic girl! You have unconsciously pronounced your own condemnation in this hacknied and now misapplied line. Retire to your chamber; and after a week's reflection, determine either to give up your father or your lover. Once more, tell me his name."

With all the composure she could assume, she replied, " Willoughby Coventry."

" The hypocrite!"

" Oh let me stem this vain abuse! And might I not ask my father why he exposed susceptible hearts to the temptation of a mutual attachment? You yourself loved Willoughby's society, nor dreamt that the morning, the evening, and the noon day, still brought your Ellinor better acquainted with the perfections of this favoured guest. Long had he combated with his growing partiality; nor till he perceived that ' love had dealt to Ellen's heart a share of all his pain,' did he presume to breathe one hope, or one profession of everlasting regard."

" Away with these romantic and vain repetitions. I thought I was associating with a man

of honour, whom I had informed of the engagement of my child. And I had every reason to believe the chaste affections of that child were honestly and irrevocably fixed, according to her heart's early selection. Hear me, Ellinor; remember you not the tears you shed, the fits you endured, till some fancied difficulties were overcome which at first had impeded your engagement with Edward Onslow; my resolution to make it a conditional one, and the despair and misery of your demeanour when his absence was determined on? Oh, Ellinor! how shall a father draw the inference? for the next, and the next, may be welcome as the first."

"Allow me to retire, Sir—allow me to shorten this painful interview; and I trust you will soon see all things in a different light. And that however you may otherwise condemn me, you will give credit to my adherence to the plain dictates of sincerity and truth."

"And remember that, with my consent, you shall never be the wife of a beggar."

Miss Onslow left her father's presence in no very enviable frame of frame, and poured forth all her sorrows on the bosom of her sympathizing companion, Mrs. Randall. Long and various were their conferences; and Ellinor de-

termined to conceal from Willoughby that part of her father's conversation which she conceived might discourage their future plans. She knew the vulnerable part of her father's character; she had often before witnessed his paroxysms of violent passion, and knew that they were never of long duration; and she felt convinced, that were she once united to Willoughby, he would ere long pardon and receive them into favour. Besides, she had no repugnance to the eclât of an elopement. Would it not be avowing to the adored master of her affections, that neither persecution nor prejudice, not even the commands of a parent, could lessen her attachment, nor make her shrink at the condemnation of a misjudging world for the steadiness of her conduct—for the step she would be "nothing loth" to take, in order to become the wife of Willoughby Coventry? It need not be asserted that these reflections were neither the result of a well-regulated mind, nor of reasonable or highly-cultivated intellects; but as a degree of forethought or policy, or any other more fashionable term than cunning, is frequently the companion of a weak mind and undisciplined passions, so did the beautiful but resolute Ellinor now arrange all things, as she imagined, for the

success of her favourite plans. She caressed, threatened, and persuaded Mrs. Randall to the necessity of decision; and fearing Willoughby's usual call, or that her father might severely reproach him by letter before a due preparation of what had happened, she contrived that the following notes should immediately pass between them.

"TO WILLOUGHBY COVENTRY, ESQ.

"Oh, my dear friend, surely never misery has equalled mine! I have hinted one interesting subject to my father; and need I add, my misery proceeds from being compelled to say to you, do not come here at present. On your faith and honour I implicitly rely. The storm will blow over. Randall shall see you as soon as possible; and I hope, ere long, to contrive that happiness for myself. Alas! how long and dreary is the day without so blessed an expectation! You may safely send me a line by this messenger. Fate may part us; but I am

"Your's eternally,

"ELLINOR."

Various and contending were the emotions of Willoughby's mind at the receipt of the above billet. Ellinor distressed and unhappy—Ellinor braving a father's anger for his sake—calling as it were on him to tranquillize her mind, and give her freedom. Her beauty, her apparent candour, her enchanting partiality, put all reasonable thoughts to flight; and guarding carefully from his own little domestic circle the causes of a perturbed mind, he immediately wrote to Miss Onslow the following incoherent note.

"My adored Ellinor!

"Dare I say, resolve at once to give me the exclusive power of becoming your guardian and protector. Prepared as we have been for this stroke, let us not render it heavier by self-inflicted misery. What would I urge! Help me to some expression of the feelings which torture a heart wholly your own. For worlds would I not endeavour to persuade you to leave your parental abode, if I felt not the conviction that your father would forgive the step, and receive us both to his heart and his home—that he would attribute our temerity to the tender

union of our hearts, not to presumption or filial disobedience. Think, dearest, how sweet were then our future task, to shew our gratitude by a life of unremitting attentions to a father's will. Let love now plead my cause, and your own dear heart will not negative its entreaties. Send Randall to me as soon as you can. I must not add more at present than, that I am my beloved girl's fondly attached

"WILLOUGHBY."

Did Willoughby's mind feel perfectly at peace after writing the above? He shrunk from investigating Ellinor's conduct in regard to her conditional engagement with Edward Onslow. He had not seen their last letters: and self-love and vanity contrived to throw a deceptive veil over the transfer of Ellinor's affections, and to palliate his own abuse of Mr. Onslow's confidence and hospitality; and he wished to believe, that by ever proving an affectionate husband and obedient son, all present inquietude and disappointment would be amply remunerated.

Restless and uneasy by not meeting with Mrs. Randall, he again dispatched a note to Ellinor. It ran thus—

"We can do nothing without Mrs. Randall's assistance; and you have said you can confide in her. I hope you have received my last hurried billet, wherein I urged you to consider the joy of our return to the arms of your father, to peace, to happiness, and love—to feel that we are united for ever. Dearest Ellinor, my family cannot disgrace your's. You will be also blest in the affection of a mother and sister; and to know them, will be to know their excellencies. For obvious reasons, they must remain ignorant of our present plans; but speed on, ye hours, to bring that rapturous moment, when I can give you to their encircling arms, and acknowledge that I am your happy and adoring husband! My interview with Randall shall explain to you all my arrangements; nor, I trust, will you negative my ardent wishes, but accede to the appointment of the hour and the place, that will give me even a tenderer title to your affections than the subscription of

"Your faithful and admiring lover,

"W. C."

A few more tender billets, and some interviews with Mrs. Randall, soon settled the plan

of Ellinor's flight from the parental roof—from a father who had only been too kind and indulgent to the faults of an idolized child.

He bitterly felt her present wayward conduct, and pondered deeply on the line he should pursue. He could not conquer his indignation at Willoughby's base return for his confidence and hospitality; and in the first moments of irritation, he had determined to make Edward Onslow his heir, and never to forgive his erring daughter. On consideration, conscience attached some blame to himself (knowing her romantic disposition) for throwing her so constantly in the society of such a fascinating being as Willoughby Coventry; nor was his opinion of the stability of woman improved by the consequences it had been productive of. Whatever he might concede to in future, he would now be firm in banishing Ellinor from his presence, little imagining that the supposed prisoner was about to exercise that freedom of will which sophistry, not reason, had ever contended for in her ill-regulated mind. Mr. Onslow knew not, he felt not, that principle must be founded on religion; or vain would prove the bolts and bars of parental restraint against the waywardness of caprice, the seductive influence of the artful, or

the yielding weakness of an idle or unoccupied mind. Had Ellinor been early taught her duty to God and to herself—had she felt that the breach of one great commandment might lead to the misery of breaking all—she would have known, that He who said, "Honour thy father," had annexed reward and punishment to the obedience and disobedience of the precept: she would have felt that the moral example of the great Founder of Christianity himself, in submission and reverence to his earthly parents, was not recorded in vain; she would have guarded against the first erring thought, nor lowered the dignity of her sex by sickly sensibility, or an unmeaning but dangerous coquetry of manner. She was almost the affianced wife of another, and she listened, willingly listened, to the pleadings of a changing heart; nor could finally resist the pleasure of conquering the apparent indifference of a present, too interesting object. Alas! she never knew the fostering care and salutary instruction of a mother. Mr. Onslow had lost his wife when Ellinor was born—lost her in the bloom of youth and beauty—and at that trying period bore the disappointment in sullen apathy, rather than in silent resignation. He was more and more con-

vinced that the Deity took no cognizance of the affairs of this world; that chance guided every daily and human event; or such a chasm in domestic happiness could never have been inflicted by a just and presiding Power. Nay, in the first hour of violent grief, he thus answered an injudicious but well-meaning comforter: "If there be a superintending Providence, I have only to lament that a possible multiplication of events had caused the neglect of immediate relief to my departed wife. Or, perhaps, the delegated saving angel was asleep, that had been commissioned by the omnipresent Being you are describing, to arrest the fleeting breath of her I shall ever lament."

This sentiment will be sufficient to form some idea of the instructor Mr. Onslow would have proved to Ellinor, on religious subjects, had he ever found time and opportunity to be so engaged. Ellinor's health, beauty, and accomplishments, were his chief anxiety; and to others he entrusted the important task of correcting her passions and improving her heart. Her natural genius for music and drawing had been cultivated at a fashionable school in Bath; and since she had returned home, Mrs. Randall was the person selected by her father to super-

intend the conduct, and to become the companion of his daughter.

Willoughby at length, through the prompt offices of Mrs. Randall, soon arranged a meeting with Ellinor, at St. George's, Hanover Square. Her eighteenth birth-day, just past, authorized her to receive the fortune bequeathed by her grandmother. The evening previous to this expected and important event, Ellinor was endeavouring to quiet her own perturbation, and express her obligations to Mrs. Randall; sometimes wondering whether the elopement would be in the newspaper, whether her father would immediately receive them, and wishing the interview with her new mother and sister were over: then working up her feelings to the highest pitch of romantic sensibility, she would exclaim, "Oh, my dear Randall, I, who never had a sister—I, who never experienced a mother's love—imagine the rapture of being received into the arms of both! How I shall love them!" and, but for the immediate transition from tears and feeling to dress and vanity, it might have been supposed that Ellinor felt what she so pathetically dwelt upon.

Mr. Onslow had determined on the following day to see his daughter, and to hasten their de-

parture from London; and having thought of some arrangements to discuss with Mrs. Randall, he requested to speak with her at a late hour in the evening.

Before they parted, he made some oblique inquiries after Ellinor, followed by too well founded reproaches for her undutiful conduct, and added, " In you, Mrs. Randall, I fully confide. Endeavour to bring this poor deluded girl to reason. What a blank is now my home and table! Who would be a father!" And running on in a half pathetic and half angry manner, he had touched the conscience of his auditor, by again recurring to her well-known and tried fidelity.

The conscience of Mrs. Randall would probably have recovered its tone before the morning hour that was to seal the fate of her beautiful pupil, but for the intervention of a very trivial incident. Superstition has sometimes more effect on weak minds than the pleadings of rectitude or reason. Awoke in the night by a slight noise, she soon discovered that the portrait of Miss Onslow had fallen from its elevation to the ground; and she quickly augured that such an omen of future degradation was not to be disregarded with impunity. She could not help

asking herself all those natural and various questions which her weak compliance with Miss Onslow's wishes called forth; and amidst weeping and pondering, resolving one minute to disclose the secret, and the next persisting in keeping it faithfully, she fell into an unquiet and distressing slumber. The consequence of the indecision of her mind was a dream terrific, and apparently fatal to all parties; and she awoke whilst in the act of leading Ellinor to the brink of a precipice, which, by the caprice of such nightly visions, they appeared mutually impelled to approach and to suffer by. Nor did the morning erase the impression her mind had received—apprehension for the future good of her darling Ellinor, and a latent feeling of gratitude for the uniform friendship and kindness of Mr. Onslow, made her instantly resolve to prevent the elopement. He was an early riser—and without trusting herself to see Miss Onslow, she yielded to the impulse of the moment, and requested admittance into Mr. Onslow's dressing-room. At breakfast, and deeply engaged with the newspaper, he at first heeded not her entrance. One view of her agitated countenance drew from him a vehement and anxious exclamation; but it was some

time before Mrs. Randall, through sobs and tears, could either arrange her confession, or make him comprehend the extent of her errand. Mr. Onslow's first burst of passion was dreadfully violent—then assuming a temporary calmness, he said, "Randall, have I deserved this of you? But you have probably saved Ellinor from a father's curse; yet is she equally guilty, as if she had left the house."

Mrs. Randall could only ejaculate, "Pardon, pardon;" and hearing an impatient ring from Miss Onslow's bell, she would have hurried out of the room.

"Stay, Mrs. Randall; I myself will answer the call of this unworthy girl"—and in another instant he was in the dressing-room of his daughter.

She was in the very act of trying on one of Mrs. Randall's straw bonnets; (for she was to have been disguised in the same appropriate apparel;) and imagining it was Mrs. Randall that entered the room, she said, "What a figure I do appear! Willoughby will scarcely know me."

Mr. Onslow sat down with apparent calmness, and said, "You are not going to be mar-

ried this morning, Ellinor; therefore you may lay aside your disguise. You should have better contrived your plans." Then sarcastically added, "I commiserate your disappointment; and should your lover die of despair, why, perhaps, then you would like to return to a fond forgiving father; but, by Heaven, I swear——"

"Oh! stay your dreadful oath. Nothing but the fear of your refusal should have led to this decisive step. On your affection I relied, that when I presented you a husband rich in every human perfection, you would have received him for the sake of your once tenderly beloved Ellinor." Then clasping his knees, sighs and tears and hysterics obliged him to call for assistance; and the late exulting Ellinor was carried to her bed in all the suffering of woe, disappointment, and despair.

It was a difficult task for Mrs. Randall to make her peace with the fair and indignant sufferer; but recollecting that persecution, illness, and parental cruelty, were generally the lot of the heroines she had read of, and that a favourite confidante too often broke the faith she had pledged to hold sacred, the olive branch

was at length extended to her weeping companion; and she arose the next morning with renewed spirits and determination to be firm and faithful in her vows of everlasting love. She wrote to her father; she forced herself into his presence; she quoted all the romantic effusions with which her mind was so amply stored; and, on her knees, she vowed never to give up the object of her heart's tenderest affections. Harassed by her importunity, and shaken by the violence of his own emotions, Mr. Onslow was attacked by a more than usually severe fit of the gout; and Ellinor, though she really felt for her father's sufferings, could not help secretly rejoicing they were still detained in town—in that town where Willoughby breathed —and from whom a few streets only separated her. The pain of his disorder prevented him from writing a meditated severe and reproachful letter to Willoughby; and, fortunately for Ellinor, a much-esteemed and a very sensible friend arrived at this period from Somersetshire, to pass a few days with Mr. Onslow.

We shall hereafter know the result of their conferences; and at present leave Miss Onslow in sullen sadness—Mrs. Randall in anxious so-

licitude to be again all things to her now sometimes reproachful pupil—and Mr. Onslow groaning in anguish from his distressing complaint, at intervals only soothed by the benevolent exertions of his Somersetshire friend.

CHAPTER XV.

Willoughby had concealed from Mrs. and Miss Coventry the point in agitation between him and Ellinor, nor gave the remotest hint of the eventful appointment at St. George's Church. To avoid all suspicion, he feigned an engagement on the preceding day, which would take him some miles out of town, and probably oblige him to stay all night. It may well be imagined, that he was prematurely punctual at the church in order to receive his beautiful Ellinor: all was conducted with the utmost privacy and circumspection, but every coach and every footstep passed on, and Willoughby began after the clock had struck eleven, to indulge vague but alarming apprehensions.

To send to the house was not practicable nor prudent, another half hour, and the ceremony could not take place that day; at length the hour of twelve confirmed his disappointment. Disturbed and perplexed he rushed into the street, and resorted to the usual place where Mrs. Randall and the notes had been accus-

tomed to meet him; but not till the afternoon was his anxious inquietude reduced to fatal certainty.

Ellinor had contrived to send him the following billet, written in pencil, and apparently with a trembling hand.

"Be patient, dearest Willoughby, all will yet be well: cruelly as fate has disappointed us this morning, I have not time for particulars, we shall meet I trust to part no more. Of this be assured, that neither persecution, threats, nor persuasion, shall ever make me less

"Your own and affectionate,

"ELLINOR.

"Do not write. Randall, whom I am endeavouring to forgive, shall see you as soon as possible."

Willoughby drew consolation from knowing, that no change nor caprice in Ellinor's mind had reversed their mutual destiny, for so captivated was he with her extraordinary beauty, so infatuated by the sweetness of her manners, and above all, so flattered by her partiality, that to take from him the imputation of being wholly swayed by pecuniary motives, he at that

moment would have thought, " Love and a cottage with her the height of human felicity." It is no unusual deception to temporize with our own conscience, even whilst acting against its dictates. Visionary ideas of future rectitude—of future undeviating reformation—of honourably filling up the important duties he was about to subscribe to, Willoughby wished to imagine would balance against the long account of idleness and extravagance, of indecision of character, and of every careless profession of religion, which had hitherto nearly led him to misery and ruin. With such an interesting and lovely companion as Ellinor would surely prove, former temptations would lose their power, and domestic felicity be ensured for ever. Miss Onslow's billet, and a conference with Mrs. Randall had chased away all despairing thoughts, he was assured Mr. Onslow would relent, and he was determined now to be guided by prudence and patience.

Thus ruminating, he sought his own abode: the happy Vincent was reading aloud to Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth, and the confidence and affection that seemed to subsist between them, the tenderness and rationality of his sister's demeanour, and Vincent's affectionate re-

gard, gave rise to the mental ejaculation: "Oh! that my Ellinor could be added to this dear and interesting groupe."

Of course he still concealed the events of the morning, and soon the attention of all was arrested, by Elizabeth giving him a packet from his friend Donavan, saying, "Not curiosity alone has made us ardently wish to know the contents of these papers. Our happiness can never be complete till Donavan is in some degree restored to peace."

All were impatient to hear the contents of the packet, and, Willoughby first running his eye over the pages, said, "he would read those parts most interesting for such kind friends to hear." It is needless to say, he suppressed what concerned himself alone, but the whole of the letter ran thus—

"I had hoped, my dear friend, ere this, to have bid adieu to scenes inimical to returning peace, but I have been, and indeed am still detained by the indisposition of my infant charge. The little sufferer is I trust recovering, such is the contrariety of my feelings, there have been moments that the expectation of this infant's death, his re-union with his angel mother, was a source of comfort to my lacerated mind;

and there also have been moments when I have indulged the idea of proving to him a counsellor and friend during the hazardous journey of life—when I have anticipated the arduous task with humble confidence of success, and ensured to myself a future interest in the concerns of this lower world.

" Recent hurried letters have only apprized you of my health and safe arrival hither. I have yet to tell you that I sought an interview with the father of my lost angel. To dwell on the emotions I experienced, were neither wise nor salutary. I parted with a being high in health, apparently buoyant in spirits. I met a being pale, emaciated—lost to all exertion—unable even to rise from the couch on which he was seated—hardly surrounded by the necessaries of life, with intellects affected by the extreme debility of his frame. I approached him with caution. Raising his heavy eyelids, he seemed to be vainly endeavouring to recollect my person. Then deeply sighing, he again resumed his abstracted and mournful manner. On this subject suffice it to say, that the sudden intelligence of his daughter's death had reduced him to his present pitiable situation; recovering as he then was from a dangerous illness, brought

on by heartfelt remorse, and from even exaggerated reports of her imprisonment and cruel treatment. The dear creature had made a memorandum, specifying a sum of money to be appropriated for her father's use, she only having been apprized of the state he was in, a very short time before her death. Of course every thing has been done to meliorate his sad condition. The other executor seems to leave all arrangements to me, and provided he is not harassed by business, consents to whatever is proposed. After having strictly performed all that I conceived my lost Matilda would have done, my mind seemed better nerved to enter her late spacious, but cheerless abode—the chair she had sat in—the very pen she had used were objects of unspeakable interest—a neglected article of apparel, which hung in her dressing-room, excited a cold shivering through my frame, and the garrulous narration of her principal and well-meaning domestic, had nearly overcome my fortitude. When I entered the room in which she had breathed her last, I could scarcely stand from the excess of my emotions. The good woman who attended me exclaimed, 'Ah! well a day, if you, Sir, as a stranger feel so much, can it be wondered,

that those who lived with such an angel should have cause to lament her loss! No one I believe but myself and God Almighty knows what she suffered. I would not speak ill of the dead—but my master! how he could treat her so hardly, I cannot imagine—she was too good for him—all the revenge she took was to pray for him, and when he refused to do something, she asked for her father—I verily thought her heart would break.'

"I endeavoured to say, 'we ought not to grieve, for blessed are they that die in the Lord. Your lamented lady is removed from every suffering.'

"The good woman ran on, and told me enough to confirm, had I required the confirmation, that Matilda was indeed the victim of filial duty—that she endured from her husband all that illiberality of mind could inflict, and that at times the jealousy and inconsistency of this mistaken man seemed daily to invent new methods to torment a disposition as perfect and blameless as humanity could boast of. How my heart bleeds to think what a different fate these sheltering arms might have afforded her! Willoughby, 'were there not some recompense to comfort those that mourn;' how almost

insupportable would be many of the disappointments and afflictions of life! And what a conviction does it bring, that this world is not our only resting place, that immortality is the birth-right of every created being. It is indeed generally known by experience, that in this world we enjoy little beyond the pursuit of happiness, and therefore we ought more implicitly to rely upon and look forward to the accomplishment of the promises of God—of substantial and unalterable happiness in a world to come. My companion led to the apartment which contained my lost Matilda's infant; it was a trying moment, but having gained some degree of composure, I breathed a sacred vow to heaven to become the protector and friend of the unconscious orphan. With mournful satisfaction I traced the features of his angel mother, and felt assured that the dimpled cheek and hazel eye, would ensure a continued and interesting resemblance.

"The illness of the child has in a great measure abated, but this and unforeseen business will necessarily detain me here for some little time, and however ardently I wish for the quiet and retirement of my own home, I endeavour patiently to submit to the delay. To

commune with my own heart, with Christian obedience to repeat, ' Thy will be done,' and to think of Matilda as a beatified spirit, must prove the antidotes against that pressure of affliction which now weighs so heavily on my mind and feelings.

" The lot of futurity which awaits us is known only to God, to that God who ordains in wisdom, but whose ways are past finding out. We cannot mark the boundary of a prosperous or an adverse hour, and dependent as we are on a Supreme and guiding Providence, we ought to meet with humility and submission the good and evil of this transitory existence. Willoughby, my heart too truly tells me this is no stoical declamation, yet I hope I am gaining sufficient composure of mind to contrast the early fate of my dear Matilda, with the probable lot that would have awaited her, had she been mine, and an inhabitant of this lower world. The result of my repeated meditation is, that the survivor is the only sufferer ! When tracing her late dear steps in the wild scenery with which I am surrounded, it requires more than human philosophy to quell the vain regrets of my agitated heart. And I am not surprized,

that they who deny a superintending Providence in human events, whilst the world smiles upon them, are generally prone to murmur in the hour of disappointment and affliction. Thus making God the author of evil, although they have never acknowledged the various and unmerited blessings of their past life, as springing from the Author of all good.

"I trust, Willoughby, I shall ere long live in the happiness of my surrounding friends—in the society of your excellent mother—in the interest she will take in the welfare of this unprotected child—in the realized prospects of felicity of your amiable sister, and in the conviction, that you not only now see clearly the rational path which leads to consistency of conduct, and stability on serious and important subjects, but that your theory and practice will ultimately coincide, and reward you with a conscience void of offence toward God and man. As you have been long silent on the *delirium* of your senses, may I not hope that Miss Onslow is now considered as the affianced wife of another? Selfish regrets, and the tender feelings of your mother, almost induce me to hope, that you may be enabled on good grounds to

give up your eastern expedition. More on this subject when we meet, and with every due and affectionate remembrance,

" I am your's faithfully,

" A. DONAVAN."

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Onslow's continued indisposition had reduced him to a state of great debility. Ellinor would not be denied entrance into his chamber, and though firm in the resolve never to give up Willoughby, she could not fail to feel the tenderest anxiety for her father's recovery. She was however at such a period a stranger to that practical utility, and those nameless attentions which pain and sickness require, she felt contented to witness the care of others, and to weep or smile as a momentary feeling might excite.

In the intervals of ease Mr. Onslow regarded her in a sort of sullen silence: when suffering from excruciating pain, he would sometimes exclaim, "Approach me not in mockery of the sufferings your unworthy conduct has brought on—your's is only the semblance of duty." And Ellinor then rushing from his presence, found relief in hysterical tears, and complaints of the injustice of her father's reproaches.

When Mr. Onslow became convalescent, his

friend, who had been an accurate observer of all that had past, began to reason on the improbability that Edward Onslow could ever now become the husband of Ellinor, and aware from frequent conferences with her, that she would not give up Willoughby, assured of the respectability of his family, and that they were even ignorant of his present conduct, endeavoured by every possible argument to gain Mr. Onslow's consent for Ellinor's immediate marriage.

"What! let this romantic girl triumph over her old fool of a father! I thought you had more steadiness. You know not the waywardness of Ellinor's disposition—the romantic sentiments she has imbibed from all the ridiculous novels that came in her way, and, that she is now suffering the persecution of a heroine, is I doubt not a favourite and gratifying idea."

"It is because I have studied her disposition," Mr. Harcourt replied, "that I am urgent to conclude this business; recollect the fragility of a woman's fame—years might roll on before a hero would be hardy enough to offer his hand to an imprudent and disappointed maiden. A husband's protection will now be her best security. You cannot avow any dislike to the

young man, and as to money, surely there is enough on your side for all the comforts and luxuries of life."

"It is not money, Harcourt, I am thinking of—it is the dishonourable conduct of the gentleman. I gave him plainly to understand that Ellinor's affections were engaged."

Mr. Harcourt interrupted. "And she doubtless also plainly gave him to understand by the brilliant artillery of eyes—by those manœuvres which sighs, and attentions, and opportunities will best explain, that the mind can change—that love may hope, when reason should despair. By your own statement, opportunity might have led to importunity, but till you had ascertained the stoical apathy of your late favoured guest, it had been as well—quite as prudent, to have sent your daughter into the country, and have followed her yourself as soon as possible."

"It is useless to look back, Harcourt. Who would be a father?"

"It is useless to look back," replied Harcourt, "or might I not ask, if this poor girl's mind had ever been fortified by a good education?"

"No expense has been spared, she has had every advantage."

" When I said a good education, I meant more than the fashionable learning of the day. In plain terms, has she been taught her duty to God, her neighbour, and herself? Our ideas of religion are so widely different, excuse my plain dealing, that I cannot help affirming, without religion as a stable foundation, a woman's mind, if not led from rectitude, may be tempted to all that is wayward and capricious."

Mr. Onslow sighed, and said, " She has indeed wanted a mother's care. As to religion, I wished her when she came to years of discretion to choose for herself: nor were the people I placed her with in early youth, nor has Mrs. Randall been deficient in appropriate counsel."

" I am not now about to call you to an account, or to combat some erroneous systems of female education. I ask your permission to let me talk to the young people—I ask for your credentials to settle the business as amicably as possible.

" Were I inclined to descant on what you have just said, we should certainly differ in the idea of permitting the ductile mind to remain in ignorance till a maturer age, and I could bring forward such momentous reasons that even you would become my convert; but all recrimina-

tion is useless, I am now going to seek your daughter."

"You forget Edward Onslow, the son of my brother. What shall I say to him?"

"You forget, Ellinor has said enough to him to alarm any man of delicate and susceptible feelings—to make him almost shudder at the chance of having been united to a woman of so unsteady a mind."

"Come, come, my old friend, for once trust to my management. You may as well give your consent. Cupid, that god of soft persuasion, may yet outwit us all."

These sort of conversations at length induced Mr. Onslow to yield to his friend's opinion, and he, indefatigable in the cause, had a long conference with Miss Onslow, who cried and laughed in a breath, sported her romantic ideas, and when taken into the presence of her father, fell upon his neck in all the pathos of elegant feeling.

It were useless to describe the scenes which immediately followed. Mr. Harcourt most considerately went to Willoughby himself, whose pleasing manners, fine person, and candid confessions, bespoke a future interest in all his concerns. And he undertook to explain how mat-

ters stood to Mrs. and Miss Coventry, leaving Willoughby with this oblique admonition.

" I am a stranger to you, Sir, but the delicacy with which you have spoken of the lady, and your candid avowal, that flight from a dangerous post should have been your determination, that fascinated by the witchery of beauty, and encouraged by the suggestions of vanity, you could not but perceive that the danger was a mutual one, in some measure palliate your apparent abuse of my old friend's hospitality and confidence. I would not be severe—let me see you become a good son, and a good husband, and then I hope, all things considered, I shall never repent my present interference."

It were also prolix to endeavour to pourtray the various emotions of Mrs. Coventry's mind, when Mr. Harcourt explained the reason of his visit—the first meeting she had with Willoughby, and various family conferences on the subject. In due time Mr. Onslow was introduced to Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth, and in spite of prejudice, was charmed with the little circle, to which his own was soon to be united.

In the first interview between the ladies, Mrs. and Miss Coventry were pleased with the demeanour and softness of manners which distin-

guished Miss Onslow; an unusual timidity had marked her conduct, nor were blushes wanting to render her beauty more than usually brilliant, and her manners more captivating.

As these traits of real sensibility wore off, Elizabeth sometimes felt dissatisfied with Ellinor, without daring to enquire the cause. Her excessive fondness overpowered her, and she knew not how to answer the various professions of friendship which Ellinor spontaneously poured forth to the sister of her adored Willoughby.

Elizabeth was neither cold-hearted nor precise—one soul seemed to animate herself and Vincent; but she could neither understand nor approve Ellinor's empassioned looks in Willoughby's presence, nor her tender reproaches for his occasional absence. Mr. Onslow, when he could forget his nephew, appeared to be one of the happiest of the party, and soon his mind was more at ease by receiving a letter from Edward, stating his intentions of remaining abroad two years longer, adding, that however happy he should once have been as an inmate of his uncle's family, existing circumstances had so far softened his disappointment, that he could with his whole heart wish his

cousin every possible happiness in the married state, and though tempted to add, love must decrease, where esteem is blighted—the letter seemed to tranquillize Mr. Onslow's mind.

CHAPTER XVII.

VINCENT began to be very urgent for Elizabeth to fix the period for their union, and the accustomed arrangements and preparations soon occupied all parties. In the flutter of ordering the most expensive dresses, trinkets and ornaments, pearls and jewels, Ellinor forgot her late anticipations of the eclât of an elopement, nor did her delicacy once suggest, that as no costly ornament could be the gift of her future husband, it had been perhaps more decorous and considerate if she had felt, that moderation in these articles would best become her, satisfied with the " ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." But the chances were, that St. Peter's admonition on this subject had never been perused; or if it had met her eye, she would probably think it conld only be applicable to the ancient matrons of his day. There were times when Willoughby's feelings were aroused by the thought of owing every thing on pecuniary subjects to Ellinor's family—the instability and extravagance of his former conduct

could not be forgotten, and when in the fulness of his heart he would have poured forth all its feelings to Ellinor, she, utterly incapable of estimating the motives of his seriousness, sometimes feared it originated in repentance of his engagement, an abatement of his love, or an unforeseen obstacle to their marriage; and she generally contrived by smiles and blandishments, or tender reproaches, to turn the subject, and to believe herself again the goddess of his idolatry. Nor indeed was her's an arduous task, beauty in so fair a form, the tear trembling in her dark blue eye—the heightened but delicate bloom of her transparent complexion, while she asked Willoughby, "if their pecuniary advantages were reversed: would he then take her to his heart, or doubt—or ponder—or leave her to her fate portionless and forlorn?" While she asked him this, the rapture and endearments of Willoughby were, we may suppose like other lovers similarly situated, and thus conversing, "they forgot all time."

One morning Ellinor called to ask Elizabeth to accompany her and Mrs. Randall to the various shops of gaiety and apparel, Elizabeth

excused herself on account of her mother's slight indisposition.

" My dear creature," Ellinor said, " How is it you are never in a hurry? Your dresses cannot be ready, dear, I do want to shew such elegant specimens of Mrs. H.'s taste—and did you ever see such a love as this necklace is? I am wild to think how Willoughby will admire it."

" Admire you, I suppose you mean," replied Elizabeth, smiling. " Mrs. Coventry came down stairs, and urged Elizabeth to take the drive. Before she could determine, Vincent knocked at the door."

" Ah! you little hypocrite," cried Ellinor, " here comes your apology for refusing me. I have left Willoughby prosing with my father and Mr. Harcourt, or I could not have come here without him."

" What have you refused on my account?" Mr. Vincent asked.

" The supreme pleasure of driving half the town over," said Ellinor.

" I have business in the city, and if you will admit me of the party, you will confer a favour on your very humble servant," bowing jocosely.

After calling at a variety of shops in their way home, Ellinor wished to alight at her jeweller's. Vincent had given up his city business, amused and fascinated by his fair companions. With a heart glowing with all the sensibility of a pure and ardent passion, he had marked on some occasions the delicate conduct of his beloved Elizabeth. When Miss Onslow abruptly asked her "who was her jeweller?" she replied, "That brilliant business has been long settled." And when Vincent pressed on her acceptance what she termed a useless but elegant bauble, she whispered her decided negative in such affectionate terms, that he could only reply, "Elizabeth, my full heart knows not an expression adequate to its feelings."

They were aroused by Ellinor exclaiming, "Oh dear! I wish Willoughby were here. I wish I knew which set of pearls he would like."

Elizabeth, in the kindest manner, entered into all her little doubts and caprices on the important choice, and Vincent good-naturedly added, "Surely, Miss Onslow, your taste, at least on this subject, will be the guide of Willoughby's. Judging of him by myself, the lustre or the elegance of the brightest jewel would

fail in radiance when put in competition with the lustre of your eyes."

Pleased with this common-place compliment, she rallied him on her power of inspiring him with such a gallant thought; and in the midst of those "airy nothings" of a desultory conversation, Vincent suddenly pulled the check-string, and was out of the carriage in a moment, desiring the coachman to drive on.

"My dear Elizabeth, how I pity you. Are you not very uneasy? Mrs. Randall, have you my salts? Surely Mr. Vincent is either out of his senses, or very ill, or, though I dare say I am mistaken, he met with an old acquaintance in the lady to whom I just saw him touch his hat."

Elizabeth certainly felt surprised at Vincent's sudden departure; but well knowing that caprice was never the guide of his actions, and assured that his countenance bore no mark of indisposition, she rallied the powers of her mind to parry Ellinor's ridiculous comments and consolations. After a short silence, Miss Onslow exclaimed, "Dear, how jealous I should feel, were I in your place."

"And would that solve the mystery, my dear Ellinor?"

"Perhaps not; but the very thought of your beloved brother jumping out of the carriage like a maniac, would have made me completely hysterical. Should I not have suffered dreadfully, Randall?"

Mrs. Randall warmly assented to her favourite's prophecy; and seemed to regard Elizabeth as a very extraordinary young lady.

"As I never had an hysteric in my life," Miss Coventry replied, "I will not begin now—at least, till I know for what cause I should be thus fatigued. Joking apart—I certainly do feel a little anxious to know the reason of Frederick's breach of politeness: it was very rude not to make some apology to you."

"Oh that I can easily forgive. But what a reasonable dear creature you are. Could I ever behave so, Randall?"

With a thousand charges to Elizabeth to send an explanation of Mr. Vincent's abrupt departure, Ellinor drove from Mrs. Coventry's door; and was disappointed not to find Willoughby at home, to repeat her comments, her observations, and her fears. Elizabeth felt persuaded the evening would bring with it Vincent's society, and endeavoured to suppress those anxious feelings inseparable from a truly at-

tached heart; and in conversation with her beloved mother, of Willoughby, of Ellinor, and of their expected separation, she passed the remainder of the day. Each feared to speak a decided opinion of Ellinor: and when Mrs. Coventry said, "Where is the energy of her character; where are those solid acquirements to give zest and variety to time, when the day of romance is forgotten? Our dear Willoughby should be united to a woman of strong sense, sound judgment, as well as warm affections."

"My dearest mother, she is very young, and he is so fond of her! Besides, what an advantage to have such a friend as yourself to advise and to love her."

"A husband's mother is seldom the oracle of a young woman's choice; but be it my hope and care to attach this lovely and inexperienced girl by the soft tie of affection—not to weary her with severity or animadversion. Your more rational habits and cultivated mind will do much for her; for I ever remember an old childish copy, 'Example is more prevailing than precept.' A mother-in-law is too apt to wish to rule and to advise, and to lean on the side of her son when any cloud appears in the domestic horizon. If dear Willoughby should be disap-

pointed in not having a well-governed home, and a wife able and willing to understand the important meaning of, 'Bear and forbear,' deep and lasting will be his repentance of this step—"

"My dear, dear mother," Elizabeth interrupted, "let us look to a brighter side. Ellinor's love for my brother will teach her what is most salutary for his happiness." A knock at the door made her exclaim, "Ah! here is Frederick—at any rate, we will receive the dear truant in smiles." The door opened—it was a letter by the post of little interest—it disappointed Elizabeth's expectations; but she was still induced to hope that nothing unpleasant had prevented Vincent keeping his engagement at the dinner hour. The evening wore away. Miss Onslow, who was really anxious, had walked with Willoughby to —— Street. He considerately determined to inquire at Vincent's lodgings if he had left any message. It was nearly ten o'clock, and he had not been at home. Elizabeth felt relieved when Ellinor departed; nor did she then scruple to confess her fears to Mrs. Coventry that some accident had happened to Vincent, saying, "he had particularly mentioned the afternoon for some serious and decisive conversation, even the very

day. Had I required a proof, my present feelings would convince me how dear he is become to my heart. Ellinor has talked so much of fate, and accidents, that really, my dear mother, you must think me very weak——" bursting into tears.

To the great Disposer of all events, Elizabeth soon bent in unfeigned humiliation; and tranquillized by the devotional exercise, and weary of conjecture, she slept some part of the night, and arose in renovated spirits, almost ashamed of the uneasiness she had experienced. But again—after having spent the day in listening to every footstep, to the sound of every approaching carriage, and too well recollecting Vincent's affectionate punctuality in saving her the slightest uneasiness, by ever writing the cause of any occasional absence; she seemed aroused to a painful sense, that some accident had really been the cause of his present neglect of so usual a caution.

Willoughby had done all that could be done; but many hours of suspense had worn out surmise, conjecture, and even consolation. It could not be the call of business; and Elizabeth would pledge her existence that no unworthy pursuit could have engaged Vincent;

and all began to imagine that accident had really been the fatal cause of his absence.

Elizabeth exclaimed, "Could I but fly to him, soothe his pain, and watch returning ease! Perhaps, among strangers, he is delirious or insensible."

"My dear girl, that can rarely be the case in a town like this—and it were strange if a man have not some address about him to forward the knowledge of his residence; but hark! a chaise stops"—and in an instant Vincent was in the room.

Astonished at the extraordinary and peculiar welcome he received from Mrs. Coventry and Willoughby, and even more perplexed, though delighted, with Elizabeth's unusual manner, some moments elapsed before he could give utterance to any answer to the questions which immediately met his ear. "My Elizabeth, you are ill; why, my best love, are you thus agitated?"

This brought on a mutual explanation; for Vincent having heard, with all the interest of a lover, Willoughby's perhaps exaggerated account of his sister's recent fears for his safety, begged their patient hearing of the causes of his absence.

"When I so abruptly left the carriage, my eye had caught a well-remembered number at the window of a lottery-office; Elizabeth, my love, you recollect the choice of the ticket, as well as the ticket itself, was to be your's; and a very short time gave me the assurance that the prize drawn was ten thousand pounds! You must also recollect you chose two half tickets—and the other is still in the wheel. But to proceed—an excellent but unfortunate friend had written to me from the country, to request I would purchase for him half a ticket. Need I say I chose for him your divided ticket?

"When I had ascertained that there could be no possible mistake nor disappointment in the business, I wrote to you, my love, stating, that much as I longed to lay at your feet the fruits of fortune's frolic, I was compelled from motives of humanity and friendship to see my friend, and save him from misery and a prison. His abode was fifty miles out of town; and travelling post, I arrived there by the dusk of the evening.

"It were useless to pain your sensibility, my dear friends, by dwelling minutely on the scenes I witnessed. My friend's wife, hourly expecting an addition to a numerous family, and

scarcely able to support the idea of a separation from her husband on the morrow; children, that were not asleep, crying in all directions; packages half closed; and servants apparently unable, from the surprise of the moment, to execute any given orders. All this too truly shewed that the anticipated prison and misery were about to be realized. The fact is this—my poor friend had been surety for an unprincipled being, and his own liberty and probable ruin were to be the sacrifice; for living, fatally living, beyond his income, the amount of the debt it was impracticable for him to raise; and the afflicted wife was literally weeping in the arms of her husband, avowing she should never support the coming hour, as I opened the door.

" Conceive, if you can, the revolution which half an hour made in their ideas. With caution I unfolded the reason of my visit: and when I convinced my friend I was not dealing in fiction, he could only ejaculate, 'Merciful Heaven!' and covering his eyes with his hand, remained in silent meditation. The tide of joy too impetuously rushed through the weakened frame of his wife—and she fainted. By turns, the children clung to us; nor till late in the evening

could we boast of any thing like order and rationality. I never knew a happier or more sincerely attached couple than these friends had been; and I may venture to say, that eventful evening was not one of the least happy in their lives.

" After a slight repast, the moon shone brightly, and I determined to return to town immediately. Although at ease in regard to my own Elizabeth, from having written the above-mentioned letter, which I now find never reached you, from some unpardonable neglect, I ardently longed to be with all my heart held dear; and the entreaties of my companions vainly opposed my determination.

" After procuring fresh horses, and whilst speaking on matters of business with my friend, an unusual bustle was heard in the house; and he was requested by a servant to go up stairs.

" In short, the chaise that waited for me was employed to fetch the necessary attendants for the lady. Of course, I then yielded to my friend's solicitations to remain with him till morning; and in a few hours I had the pleasure to congratulate him on the birth of the only son he had ever been blessed with. I should have mentioned, on the morning I so

unceremoniously parted with you, Elizabeth, the post had brought me a letter from my friend, stating, that his circumscribed income and increasing expences rendered it totally impossible for him to answer the demand which he hourly expected—that he was himself in debt—and that the arrest for three thousand pounds would ultimately prove his decided ruin.

"And now, dearest Elizabeth, make interest with your mother to order me something to eat, my mind having been too much engrossed all the day to think of so vulgar a sensation as hunger; but you shall soon see that food for the mind will not also supply food for the body."

The next morning, while Vincent and Elizabeth were talking over past events, and settling future plans, Vincent carelessly threw a paper on her lap—and opening it, she found the enclosure of five thousand pounds.

"It is your own, my best love"—as he saw her intention to return the paper.

"Now hear me, Frederick. May I not acknowledge that, in a very short time, it will be our mutual wish that one purse, as well as one heart, should influence our actions?"

" Expend this sum in those ornaments which your delicacy and consideration have hitherto induced you to refuse."

" When I am your wife, I hope I shall ever despise that contemptible affectation of any peculiarity for dress—of a meanness of apparel beneath my allotted station. I accepted, with grateful feelings, the elegant watch and beautiful set of pearls you selected for me; but beyond these useful and ornamental appendages, neither reason nor conscience allow me to wish for."

" And thus permit your sister elect to rival you in all her borrowed radiance!"

" We are differently situated. I can have no right to controul her taste, however I may fancy I should act otherwise."

With an affectionate pressure of the hand, Vincent replied, " She will never rival my Elizabeth." And then adducing every kind and considerate argument, he proposed that Elizabeth should present to her mother four thousand pounds, and the other thousand to Willoughby. This was a temptation she could not resist, as it would secure a trifling independence to Mrs. Coventry, and perhaps relieve Willoughby from some perplexities.

" My dearest love," Vincent interrupted her, when she asked him if part of the money should not assist his friend, " that business I have already settled; nor would he be denied giving me security for future payment of a trifling present loan. But let not money be the only subject of our conversation." And if love then took the lead, and drew from Elizabeth the promise of becoming his wife on the day which was to unite Willoughby and Ellinor, we may venture to affirm that neither wished to retract from the solemn and sacred engagement of their hearts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Willoughby had forced himself to write to Donavan a brief account of every recent occurrence—dwelt most empassionately on the loveliness of Miss Onslow—with rapture on her flattering partiality, and avowed, that however erroneously he might hitherto have acted, he was resolved that his future life should be devoted to domestic duties, and that as the husband of his adored Ellinor, he should look forward to halcyon days, and bid adieu to his late never-ceasing anxieties.

After deprecating Donavan's censure, or unavailing remarks, and mentioning his sister and Mr. Vincent in very affectionate terms, he thus proceeds,

" And now, Donavan, as the time of your return draws very near, I have to request in the name of your faithfully attached friends, whether your mind is sufficiently composed to perform at the altar the eventful ceremony? Think not of the request, if the exertion would

be a painful one—if, under all existing circumstances, you had rather decline just now to witness our felicity. Your's is indeed a hard and trying fate, but, my good fellow, time is the surest remedy against every unpleasant retrospect, and particularly of those afflictions which we do not bring upon ourselves. There are hours, Donavan, when I think no sacrifice would be too great to remember my father without one remorseful feeling; nor dare I always pronounce, that he would even now let love plead my excuse for every late occurrence. What is done cannot be undone, and wiser heads than mine have been bewildered by the captivating charm of beauty. Vincent has a noble mind; he seems exactly calculated to make my sister happy, yet for the soul of me I cannot comprehend nor imitate their conduct. In company or out of company, Ellinor is the idol of my attraction, all other women appear only as foils, insipid and uninteresting. Many may be termed beautiful, but Ellinor is beauty personified; and when she exerts her musical powers, my senses are indeed wrapt in ecstasy. I know from various circumstances how ardently Vincent and Elizabeth are attached. See them in company, they are certainly affec-

tionately attentive to one another, but you may seek in vain for the glow of rapture on Vincent's cheek, or the responsive glance from Elizabeth's bashful eye. As soon as you arrive, all things will be immediately settled: Mr. Onslow is liberal and considerate. He is greatly influenced in all his decisions by the counsel of a Mr. Harcourt, to whom I believe I am also indebted for some late conciliatory measures."

He then speaks of Mr. Vincent's destination of the lottery ticket with every grateful feeling, but more than hints, that he himself must be compelled to make an immediate use of the money, in order to discharge a few unpleasant debts, and again promises for the rectitude and regularity of his future conduct.

When Donavan received the above letter, he was just sealing one to announce that every arrangement was made for the infant and his nurse's departure from the north, apprizing Mrs. Coventry of the probable time they would arrive in London; and stating, as he himself could travel with greater expedition, he should remain behind a short time after they had set out. With great delicacy and consideration, he liberally settled pecuniary matters with Mrs.

Coventry, and planned the future residence of all parties, provided it met with her approbation.

He mentioned some affecting circumstances relative to Matilda, and avowed, that to commune with his own mind in the quiet and retirement of home, was a blessing he now looked forward to, with no little degree of impatience.

After reading Willoughby's letter, the word "infatuation" escaped his lips. "Elopement, her father's forgiveness—mutual attachment—captivating charm of beauty"—all stood in array before him. Then the words, "What is done cannot be undone," caused him to exclaim, "Too true indeed! poor Willoughby," and immediately taking up his pen, he wrote as follows.

"As I have this instant written a long letter to Mrs. Coventry, you will thereby know of all my proceedings, but I cannot let the post depart, without expressing my unfeigned astonishment at the news which your letter contains. Where comment and observation are useless, they are, generally speaking, better suppressed. Willoughby, you were my earliest, dearest friend, nor have I ever ceased to love you, even

in the midst of presumptuous reproof for past errors, and friendly counsel for future stability. Nor can I at a time like this say aught to disperse the golden visions you have yourself created. Mistake me not, I would not even cloud so fair a prospect by one anticipation of evil, but rather endeavour to impress on your mind, that in a great measure it rests with yourself to realize scenes of permanent and domestic happiness; and I can only hope and trust that this all-conquering Ellinor will ever retain a due influence over your heart and affections. Much could I say on the danger of exalting the companion of our future life to that pinnacle of perfection, rarely gained by weak and erring mortals; and in the days of courtship worshipping as an idol, a creature that in the days of marriage sometimes sinks in the imagination of the enthusiast, below the rightful standard of woman. Much could I expatiate, and you now too well know I speak from experience, on the halcyon days, that spring from an exchange of the heart's best affections, where, perhaps, if a little tinctured, not warped by romance, the fair perspective, deludes us into the belief of long and lasting felicity. But, dear Willoughby, it is not my present aim to give you one gloomy

anticipation of the future. You now think love and rationality are incompatible—that Ellinor's beauty and accomplishments will ever shine with undiminished lustre; again, I repeat, it rests with yourself, that they will do so. That is, if the good qualities of her mind have riveted your esteem—if you do not prize too extravagantly youth's transient graces. The portrait now before me of my ever-tenderly remembered Matilda, is a convincing proof, that her soul-inspired countenance was the magic that first riveted my senses. And when in those blessed days that I could gaze on it without restraint—when a father sanctioned our attachment—when the bloom that mantled on her cheek, and the lustre that sparkled in her eye, gave every reasonable hope of their continuance; I felt that neither time, nor all its dreaded appendages, could lessen my fond attachment, nor weaken my well tried, and just esteem.

"Judge then of what I endured when I imagined that such an angel had been dazzled by the glare of wealth, and had proved false, for the empty sound of titles, and the state of worldly grandeur. Judge also of the different feelings of my mind to know, that she was consistent and excellent to the last—that I may

now mourn the victim, not lament the culprit. But whither am I wandering? Willoughby, forgive me; I meant only to bid you reflect, seriously reflect, that the words 'for better and for worse,' may extend to eternity, and that religion should be the foundation of our present and future hopes of happiness. It is more than probable that I shall never marry, whilst too faithful memory retraces past events, neither inclination nor honour can lead me to endeavour to engage the affections of any young woman. I believe I once said, your sister was the nearest counterpart of her I have lost, than any being I ever met with, and with all a brother's love, I shall now rejoice to see her the wife of a man so estimable as Vincent. I had often marked his silent but unobtrusive admiration, when 'poverty but not his will,' induced him to shun increasing danger, when the gay and gallant Trelawny appeared to be the happy and favoured rival; and also in the season of adversity and affliction, when your sister looked the consoling angel, and acted with more than female heroism. The large and unexpected acquisition of fortune which Vincent has met with, will prove a general good; and I may venture to prophecy, that it will be one of the

few instances, where prosperity cannot warp the mind, harden the heart, or influence the actions.

"In answer to the united request of my dear and estimable friends, I should feel degraded in my own opinion, if I could hesitate to comply with it. I do not mean to write again before I set out for London, and to see Matilda's child under the care and protection of your excellent mother, will relieve my mind from much anxiety. Adieu, my dear friend, and believe that I ever am,

"Your's faithfully,

"A. DONAVAN."

The more Donavan reflected on the conduct of Miss Onslow, the more he doubted whether she was the woman to suit the unsteady disposition of his friend. He himself could not be satisfied with so sudden a transfer of the heart's affections, and considered her intended elopement, under all existing circumstances, as an outrage of delicacy and decorum, as too sure an evidence of a fickle disposition and unreflecting mind. He might be too fastidious, but he still termed Willoughby's attachment, infatuation, and with regret observed, that mind

seemed to weigh very little in that scale of perfection, wherein he had balanced the transcendent qualities of the beautiful, but romantic Ellinor. He called to mind the violence of Willoughby's grief and remorse on the death of his father, and even many vows of sacred import, which he was compelled to acknowledge had never been fulfilled.

Alas! Donavan was convinced that his friend deceived himself; the radical cure had not been effected, because the remedy had not been sought, where alone it was to be found; but that the renunciation of errors and evil habits, relied solely upon human strength, and remorseful vows of amendment.

Donavan was no cynical reformer of the vices of others, but he could not see the man, the companion of his boyish days, the son of the dearest friends he had ever known, becoming the martyr of self-deception, without endeavouring to arouse the dormant faculties of his mind, and teach it to rise superior to this sublunary state.

But Donavan also knew that much well-meaning counsel failed in its salutary effects, by not paying a due regard to times and seasons; and, that at such a moment as this, when love, and

joy, and prosperity seemed all beaming in endless perspective. To speak to him of the insufficiency of human wisdom, or to point out the numerous and fundamental errors of modern philosophy, were indeed to talk an unheeded language, and would certainly be disregarded till a more convenient season.

But still Donavan hoped better things of Willoughby, and he determined in the spirit of disinterested friendship, when proper opportunities should offer, to rouse his slumbering faculties—to point out the danger of yielding to the mind's instability, and to fix his yet wavering sentiments on the sacred truths of religion. Much Donavan knew depended on the wife he had chosen, and he could only hope that she would be as estimable as she was lovely, on a nearer and more intimate acquaintance. He augured incalculable advantages to Miss Onslow, from the society and example of Mrs. and Miss Coventry; and if some natural regrets arose in his mind from the fatal conviction, that in Matilda's grave was buried all his own hopes of domestic happiness, few would arraign his want of fortitude, or not sympathize with his heart-felt disappointment.

FROM MISS ONSLOW TO MISS HARRINGTON.

" I know not, my dearest Louisa, whether you are in joke or earnest, when you condole with me on the different plan of our marriage; you talk of the eclât of an elopement, and the heaven-born delight of a reconciliation—of being noticed in the public papers, and above all, the ecstatic reflection of giving to the man of my choice, the dear conviction, that no difficulties should weaken my attachment or confidence in his honour. Pause a moment, and you will be convinced, that neither cold hearted prudence, nor selfish pecuniary motives actuated my conduct in not keeping the eventful appointment: you forget, I told you, it was the tender conscience of Mrs. Randall that disarranged all our projects, but I have forgiven her, for I am persuaded it was not to be my fate to act in this one instance solely from the mind's independence. Willoughby, my adoring Willoughby, is every thing the fondest heart can wish. I am sure I have not said too much of him, he is the most perfect model of manly beauty that your imagination can form; and his voice, even in common conversation, is harmony itself; think

then when he talks to your happy friend of love, of joy, and peace, when he calls me the star of his future happiness, and his radiant eye is fixed in tender rapture on my face, whether I am not the most blest of human beings. The day will soon be fixed which will bind the nuptial tie in the rosy fetters of love, and on that blessed day Miss Coventry will also become a happy wife. I told you of her attachment to a Mr. Vincent, and of the arrival of dear Willoughby's friend from the north, who is to read the marriage ceremony. This Mr. Donavan is interesting and delightful beyond my power to describe, and when I heard his sad story, I could not help exclaiming to Randall, 'What a beautiful novel it would make!' I have not time to write it all down: I am too much engaged in the bustle and preparation of an elegant wardrobe; and to have every thing in the first fashion, in order to do credit to my new character, to give much attention to other subjects. That dear old soul, Mr. Harcourt, has put my father into such good humour, that he is more liberal than even you can imagine, and Willoughby is a grand favourite with both. I told you I much dreaded my introduction to Mrs. and Miss Coventry, though longed to be

pressed to a maternal and sisterly bosom, for I had heard through a servant, who affirmed it to Mrs. Randall, that they were very precise, and even methodistical. Now as I hate precision, and believe, that to be methodistical, is to be religiously wicked, I absolutely trembled, when dear Willoughby led me up to them; Elizabeth's resemblance to him, and the affectionate reception I met with, cheered my drooping heart, and I love them both dearly. I cannot yet find out whether Elizabeth ever reads novels, dances, or goes to plays, but she is so cheerful and rational, that I sometimes say to myself, I shall never be like her.

"But how I am running on; I declare I forget the chief subject of my writing, which is, to claim your promise of being my attendant on the day of marriage. Come to us, therefore, my beloved friend, as soon as possible, that I may pour into your gentle bosom all the tender feelings of mine, and introduce you to that interesting being, who will soon become my protector and my husband. I say come as soon as possible, because after the ceremony we are going for a few weeks to the Continent, and it is quite the fashion for newly married people to travel alone. My father and Mrs.

Randall will take you back into Somersetshire, unless you can contrive to spend some time with your aunt in London, and then we shall meet again after our delightful expected tour. My dear sister elect will not go so far from her mother: can she love as I do? or would she not leave all people and things, when she is the wife of the man she adores? But I cannot think or plan for others.

" It is however settled, that after three months, we are all to remove from London: Mr. Vincent is now gone with the interesting Donavan to his living, in order to look at a beautiful cottage for dear Mrs. Coventry's future residence, and perhaps to purchase an estate within a few miles for himself. They all prefer a country life, and Willoughby says it would be charming if we could also meet with an eligible residence in the same county. Provided he is with me, all places will be alike to me, yet I do think it is wise to remain these winter months in town, if only to sport my beautiful dresses and splendid jewels. I hope Willoughby will go with me every where, or I shall shut myself up in despair.

" How very odd; I was interrupted by a note from Elizabeth to refuse our invitation to

meet a party of my father's friends on Sunday; some gentlemen from the country. After all, if she is a methodist, and will not dine out because it is Sunday, I am sure Willoughby has no such prejudices, for he has never yet mentioned one word about religion. As I have heard my father say, I do not think those that are always besieging Heaven with prayers can alter their destiny, or act more honourably than they who say, 'Whatever is, is right;' and practise the best they know.

"I believe I am very ignorant on the subject of religion, but then my comfort is, that never having been taught, or puzzled, by reading sermons and the Scriptures, I cannot be answerable for not being implicitly guided by their instructions and doctrines. Well, I am very young, there is quite time enough for serious thoughts. Will it not be excellent, that I shall chaperone you to the play and the opera? You, that are a year older than I am, and do just let me hint whilst I think of it, that nothing is so vulgar as to appear much pleased and surprized at any place of public amusement, and, that it is far genteeler to talk and smile with your company in the box, than to fix your eyes steadily on the stage, and cry or laugh as your feelings

may excite. This, and a great deal more I heard from a chance fashionable acquaintance when I first came to town; moreover she added, that to colour up when complimented on our talents or beauty, was the greatest proof of never having been accustomed to fashionable society; and till I became acquainted with Willoughby, I used to endeavour to conquer every blushing evidence of what the French call mauvaise honte. Now, now that my adored Willoughby affirms, that every rising blush is 'love's proper hue,' and that my countenance when so illumined, is almost celestial; you will believe I do not try to suppress the emotions that paint my cheek so becomingly, but —— Heavens, how I am running on! Pray guard your heart against the delightful friend of my beloved, I mean against the interesting sweetness of his manner. I do not think he will ever marry. I never was partial to clerical men, but Willoughby's friend is indeed an exception to such a prejudice. You may now think of poor Edward Onslow, you could once have thought of him; I know not why I call him poor Edward—he does not seem to have grieved much for the loss of his belle cousin. I shall

impatiently expect to hear from you, and believe the everlasting friendship of your

"ELLINOR."

Donavan and Vincent were not yet returned from the rectory, but Elizabeth had received very satisfactory accounts of the estate in question, and Donavan had engaged a beautiful little cottage contiguous to the rectory, for the residence of Mrs. Coventry and the child, during the period of his infancy; and it was arranged that Vincent and his bride should go there immediately after the ceremony, in order that they might together view the estate; and remain to receive Mrs. Coventry and her charge. Donavan and Vincent were mutually pleased with one another's society, and a gleam of comfort beamed on Donavan's mind to anticipate the blessing of a future association with friends, whose general pursuits and ideas were congenial with his own; and he determined to derive one source of comfort from the contemplation of their felicity. He had already found 'joy in grief,' when he placed Matilda's child in Mrs. Coventry's arms, nor did the silent but expressive caresses of the amiable Elizabeth,

when nursing the little stranger, fail to awaken the purest sentiments of affection and gratitude in his bosom.

Vincent had written as often, perhaps oftener than the generality of lovers would do, during this temporary separation from Elizabeth; and in one of his letters, after describing the house and grounds, and planning the several improvements both for utility and comfort, he thus proceeds:

"No lover of romance can feel more impatient than I do, to realize these, at present, air-built fabrics of my imagination; for I have indeed indulged the visionary bliss of seeing the cherished wife of my affections the ornament and blessing of her house, her neighbours, and her friends. Heaven has blest us with wealth, but Elizabeth, what an heartless prospect should I have in view, if the companion of my future days wished to lavish it on the brilliant, but perishable baubles of useless vanity?

"Far be it from me to condemn with asperity the taste and choice of others, it is sufficient that I am grateful for the enjoyment of simple and rational pleasures, which, while they satisfy and elevate the mind, leave no sting

behind. It is more than sufficient, there is rapture in the thought, that the woman on whom my soul rests for every happiness, can look with indifference on the pomps and vanities of the world, and cheerfully join in all the rational pursuits which diversify the hours of retirement, and give zest to the charm of elegant and occasional society.

" This, my Elizabeth, is no vain theory of a lover's mind; long had I marked the general tenour of your character, the reasonable and pious sentiments which guided your practice. But, dear Elizabeth, these thoughts are quickly driven away by a re-perusal of your own invaluable and generous sentiments. To trust to an unerring power for a continuance of blessings, is a better conviction of its superintendance of the affairs of this world, than to admit the supposition, that they may be withdrawn, through the medium of a blind or misguided chance.

" What can balance the weight and importance of such a conviction! What can induce short sighted mortals as we are, to reject an idea so essential to worldly peace, and present contentment!

" Could we mark the sneer of modern ridicule on the perusal of such a letter as this, to

an affianced bride—to a being glowing in all the loveliness of youth and beauty, we should doubtless hear an effusion of senseless sophistry, and probably an accusation of cold hearted indifference as applicable to the eccentric writer. And what then, my Elizabeth? Such flimsy levity could not touch hearts so attached and so confiding as our's. We might scruple to condemn an erring fellow mortal, but we should surely pity the mind that could not comprehend the sublimity of that love, which humbly trusts it will be extended beyond this present state of existence.

"I am counting, with almost blameable impatience, the hours that must intervene before I am again blest in your society. Shall I make interest with Mrs. Coventry to persuade you to shorten the period? What would I say? Elizabeth, my dear and candid Elizabeth, is above the little art of giving pain, to make a vain display of power; and may experience teach us, that days of courtship are only the prelude to years of happiness in the marriage state.

"You will readily believe that your brother and Miss Onslow are not forgotten; but that they claim every affectionate wish for their future happiness. I have had much conversa-

tion with Mr. Donavan about your brother; time will not permit a repetition of the sentiments of this inestimable friend! Adieu! almost my own Elizabeth! I will not affront your understanding by signing myself your adoring lover; but neither reason nor delicacy can object to my avowing, that I am

"Your tenderly attached

"Lover and friend,

"FREDERICK VINCENT."

CHAPTER XIX.

At length the eventful day was fixed for the marriage of both parties. None but a mother's heart can feel the pleasing yet painful emotions on such an important occasion. To part with a being, cherished and beloved in infancy and childhood, esteemed and confided in at a maturer age—the companion in health, the nurse in sickness, the friend and associate in all the daily occurrences of life—must prove a severe trial to maternal sensibility, however the feelings of selfishness are suppressed by the vigorous efforts of a superior mind.

Mrs. Matthews had ever held in view the approaching marriage of her young favourite, and she always gratefully acknowledged the improvements of her children whilst they were Elizabeth's pupils. Morning calls had frequently passed between the ladies; and Mrs. Coventry could justly estimate the good qualities which Mrs. Matthews possessed, and felt gratified by her high opinion of Elizabeth's

merits. One morning the three little girls called, and some parcels being taken out of the carriage, they each entered the room, making their little offering to their dear lovely governess—the eldest, checking herself, said, "Forgive us for calling you governess now—indeed, Mamma told us to say Miss Coventry; but I hope you love us as well as ever." And then, if not in a polished manner, with glowing cheeks and infantine impatience, they threw into her lap some very costly ornaments, and a beautiful Brussels lace veil. A note of apology for the liberty, and warm-hearted congratulations from Mrs. Matthews, almost overpowered Elizabeth's feelings. The children spent a happy hour with her; and, of course, took home with them all the acknowledgments that such a mind as Elizabeth's could dictate.

The hasty entrance of Mr. Harcourt arrested the attention of all. "Young ladies," he immediately said, "are surely most unpersuadable beings to deal with."

"I thank you, my good Sir, for so general and decisive a compliment," Elizabeth returned.

"I verily believe you are an exception, Miss Coventry; but a truce with all unpleasant sub-

jects. Every thing is now finally signed and sealed between the parties I have just left, and I am now at your service. This is the hour which was yesterday appointed. Nay, my dear, if you repent, now is your time to say so—that fluctuating colour tells me you are either very glad or very sorry."

"Dear Mr. Harcourt," Elizabeth replied, "let me entreat you to make your observations in silence"—and giving her hand to Vincent, they advanced to the table to look over the necessary papers on such an occasion. All was soon arranged to the satisfaction of the parties; and the only shadow of contention had been some remonstrances against the liberality of Vincent's settlements.

Mr. Harcourt's discomposure had arisen from Ellinor's positive adherence to have every shilling of her own independent fortune given without restriction to Willoughby—"Surely, if I can entrust myself, I may entrust that vile dross of money to him—surely we shall hereafter have but one interest; and I should despise the man who would endeavour to separate love and interest. My father must do as he pleases; but I candidly own, had I the power, my heart

and hand, and whole fortune, should be at the disposal of the man to whom my warmest affections are given."

Much altercation might have ensued, had not Mr. Harcourt conciliated measures; and to do Willoughby justice, he never sought to influence Ellinor in any of her decisions.

CHAPTER XX.

The expected day was ushered in with a genial and a brilliant sun, and the ceremony was impressively performed by Donavan. Two more lovely brides had seldom knelt at the sacred altar; yet was there a striking contrast both in their dress and demeanour. Ellinor approached almost in childish gaiety; nor till the deep-toned and melodious voice of Donavan had nearly finished the awful ceremony, did she seem to feel that any serious ideas could be attached to the vows her lips were uttering.

Mr. Onslow had declined meeting the party at church. Ellinor's friend, Miss Harrington, was one of the bride's maids, whose manners and conduct did not impress the whole circle with a very favourable opinion of her intrinsic merits. Elizabeth trembled as she walked up to the altar; but the moment the ceremony began, she appeared nerved with new strength, and looked the purest emblem of beauty, youth, and innocence.

But passing over the chastened rapture of

the lovers, the usual forms, when Donavan closed the sacred book; and all the varied emotions of the brides, when the carriages were announced for their departure from home; Miss Onslow's animated adieu to her father, to her friend and companion; Elizabeth's heart-rending emotions when Mrs. Coventry repeated her silent embrace; we take leave of the bridal party, and insert two letters, which were received in due time after the commencement of their respective journies.

The one addressed to Miss Harrington, from Willoughby's bride, ran thus—

" My much-loved friend,

" Having just written a few lines to my father, I cannot let another post depart without keeping the promise you so earnestly exacted, to have the earliest intelligence of your absent friend. Expect not, however, I can fully narrate the incidental occurrences of our journey, or express my surprize or admiration of a new country, people, or manners—I will only say, we had a most favourable passage to Calais, and that, in good earnest, I was neither sick nor sorry; that I am delighted at the idea of being in Paris; and that weather and all things

have combined to cheer and gild our prospects. Blest as I am in being the wife of the most perfect of human beings, my own happiness is the subject that can alone engross my pen; and yet I ask myself a thousand times in the day if I am really the wife of Willoughby Coventry, and whether such unequalled felicity will continue. He anticipates my every wish; and I have observed how much his beautiful eyes sparkle with delight, when 'la belle Angloise' excites any casual admiration. Paris, I doubt not, will be charming; and yet how much more I shall exclusively enjoy my darling husband's society in the shades of retirement, in rural quiet, undisturbed by vulgar observation. Entre nous, though I love Elizabeth excessively, I was not sorry that we made a separate route. Willoughby now attends only to me; and he is so fond of his sister, that of course she would have been consulted on all occasions. You cannot think how lovely and convenient my travelling dresses are; and Willoughby says my English fashions will be the admiration of Paris. I do not repent now that we did not elope, for a million of reasons—Willoughby knows it was not my fault that the plan was discovered, and of course he is convinced I would have given up

every thing for him. Poor Randall! I believe I at first led her a sad life; I am glad she is going to live with her brother; and I hope by this time my father is quietly seated at home in his own easy chair, Mr. Harcourt his opponent at chess, and his heart at ease on account of the law-suit. By the bye, how kind it was of that dear old man to consent to be my father's visitor for some time—I shall always love him for his kindness to Willoughby. The worst of him is, he proses too often about making a good wife, of being aware of a first quarrel, and not expecting perfection in any human being; but as old people are no judges of these matters, I always listened in silence, nor ever remembered for more than five minutes the collected wisdom of age and apathy. Indulged and idolized as I am, there is no chance of my not making a good wife, as well as being a happy one; harsh treatment indeed might make me savage; but I think I have every reason to be satisfied with the attachment of my adored and adoring husband. Is he not, Louisa, the handsomest man you ever saw? You know, when we arrive from the Continent, I am to chaperone you to public places, and then you will find I do not exaggerate his perfections. When I look at the ring on my

finger, and think I am married, it is so droll, I quite laugh at the idea. Pray take care of poor little Bijoux till I return; Willoughby says he shall not allow me to kiss the animal as I used to do. We shall see. I believe it is best to have some will of one's own; for if we give up trifles, we may in time become mere passive machines; and though Willoughby laughs at me for some opinions, I still entertain a very great idea of the mind's independence. He seems now to live upon my smiles; nor could I withdraw them if I would; 'for the dimples will speak, when there's love in the breast.' I do not think this is a right quotation—n'importe. My French accent is wonderfully admired. I mean to make some beautiful purchases at Paris. What a proof of friendship I am giving you in this long chat, when I know Willoughby is alone; but as I have more than once made him wait dinner while I was hurrying to change my dress, I will now say adieu, lest I try his patience again. He only said, 'Dearest Ellinor, late travelling will not be pleasant.' Besides, I must write a few lines to my new mamma, or I am sure he will not be pleased. I will teaze him to shew me the long letter he has just finished. I think I am the heroine of the page. If he will not, I am

determined to make him suppose there are secrets in this epistle; and nothing shall persuade me to let him read it. Badinage is so delightful with those we love, and Willoughby does look so handsome when he pretends to be in earnest on any subject, that I almost think the delight of reconciliation would amply compensate for a little brouillerie, perhaps not amounting to an absolute quarrel. Once more adieu! I know you will often think of

"Your affectionate and happy friend,

"How strange to sign,

"Ellinor Coventry."

ELIZABETH'S LETTER TO MRS. COVENTRY.

"In what terms or language, my dearest mother, can I give you any adequate idea of the varied emotions of my heart, to address you as the wife of Frederick Vincent; or how describe his tender and delicate attentions; his patience, at first, with my almost childish tears, when I had really parted from you; and his unwearied kindness to promote every comfort?

"Think not, however, that your lessons and example have been thrown away, and that I

have indulged those morbid feelings of acute sensibility which embitter the present moment, and prevent the anticipation of future good. And though I do not think it can be in nature for a young woman to leave her home and her paternal friends, to change her very name, to belong exclusively to a being for ever and for ever, without experiencing some painful emotions; yet would she little understand the purport of vows registered in heaven, and the great responsibility of the name of wife, if such an affectionate relation did not chase away even natural regrets, and bid her look forward to bright and cheering prospects. We arrived in safety at this sweet retreat, and we are hourly fancying, and are planning some new comfort and accommodation for the expected and loved inhabitants. With what joy shall I welcome you, my dearest mother, and your lovely infant charge! Had existing circumstances permitted, how gladly should I have felt settled in our new abode without remaining an hour in London; but when I am convinced of what consequence it is for Frederick to be in town for some ensuing months on pecuniary matters, I make up my mind to be very happy, and, with his assistance, to be very rational, even in London. I

understand the extent of the old gentleman's fortune is beyond all expectation, though to settle some points will just now require a clear head and constant attention. Mr. Donavan's parsonage is very complete and very delightful: the house is in the most finished cottage style; a beautiful lawn and flower-garden and green-house contiguous; a compact kitchen-garden in a convenient direction; and, beyond the shrubbery, a small paddock and field open upon the most beautiful view that hills and dales and water can command. There is a private gravel walk that leads to the church, which is not a modern building, but most commodious in the interior, and at a distance is a very picturesque object. We have already had some convincing proofs how Donavan is beloved and respected in the parish; but, my dearest mother, you yourself are coming, and will, with heart-felt satisfaction, witness the exemplary conduct of the son of your adoption. It were presumption to exclaim, Why were two hearts so in unison, so tenderly attached, in this world for ever separated? Why was not Matilda spared, to enhance every blessing of his life? Short-sighted mortals as we are, to dare even to question the decrees of Omnipotence!

"My dear Frederick and your grateful and happy Elizabeth have already taken a drive to Beech Park; and could you have listened to our ideal plans, our theory for the future, you would perhaps give us credit for the wish to reduce them into practice, and bless that Almighty Being who has united your child's fate with a husband who knows the importance of wasting or improving the talents committed to his care. My dearest mother, two happier beings can scarcely exist than Frederick and myself: we have health, youth, and riches; and we look forward to that 'progressive virtue' which, though it cannot exclusively entitle us to 'approving Heaven,' will, through Heaven's blessing, secure to us a good and peaceful conscience. Our pains and pleasures cannot be solitary, from our dependence on one another; therefore the weight of human calamity must be softened, and the value of terrestrial blessings heightened, and probably reason and affection may ever go hand in hand to guard us from presumption or despair through this chequered state of existence. You would, my dearest mother, make every allowance, were I to repeat all the kind expressions which fall from the lips of my husband.

"Dear Willoughby has given us a few lines —long, very long, may his present happiness continue! I think Ellinor is good tempered, and can be most interesting where her affections are warmly engaged. Had she been blessed with a tender and judicious mother, her instability on some subjects, and her adherence to others, had been less erroneous. Your experience and kindness shall prove her guiding stars; and as our circle of love has increased, so, dear mother, I trust our prospects of happiness will continue to brighten. My husband unites with me in all that duty and affection can dictate. I am counting the days till we are blessed with your presence, which alone can add to the happiness of your tenderly attached daughter,

"Elizabeth Vincent."

In due time, Willoughby and his bride arrived from the Continent, and were settled in an elegantly furnished house in Hanover Square for the winter. Ellinor still fancied that rural retirement would increase their happiness, though she anticipated the gaieties of a London season with all the avidity of youth and inexperience. She had been delighted with

Paris, and fully gratified with the admiration her beauty had excited. The quick succession of amusement, and the almost idolizing attentions of her husband, his evident exultation when her superior loveliness bore off the palm of beauty, might have entranced stronger minds than Ellinor's; but, as Willoughby was still the worshipped image of her soul, the vanity she experienced was untinctured with any species of levity, and both imagined that this day-dream of perfect happiness would last for ever. Where wealth and its various appendages glare on the public eye, former acquaintances are easily renewed, and nominal friends readily acquired. Those associates who had shunned Willoughby in an adverse hour, could now recognize him in his elegantly appointed carriage, in his equestrian exercises, or when driving the lovely Ellinor in the various haunts of fashion; they could familiarly bow in places of public resort, and even claim a degree of intimacy in the more private but splendid circle. Willoughby, good-humoured and unreflecting, wished to forget all former impressions; and though he mentally despised the flatterer, received the flattery with careless indiscrimination. That he "was a famous lucky fellow,"

was the general opinion; and there were moments when he imagined the variety of some former convivial meetings would even give a greater zest to the more chastened society of his beloved wife.

Ellinor became insensibly the votary of fashion, though she continued to dwell on the pleasures of retirement, and the ecstatic bliss of rural delights, with Willoughby for her only companion; and whilst woods, and shades, and hills, floated on her imagination, the splendid ball, the elegant gala, or the more select party, engrossed her time, her thoughts, and her general interest. Miss Harrington was her guest, whose avidity for public amusements encouraged the present bias of Ellinor's mind and pursuits.

Vincent and Elizabeth practically illustrated their theory of a rational life in the midst of a gay and dissipated town. No persuasion nor raillery could induce Elizabeth to relax that line of conduct which reason, sense, and above all, religion had marked out; and hence Sunday was ever a day of devotion as well as of rest. She certainly condemned the self-privilege of the rich and gay, who, by their appearance at a fashionable chapel in the morning, imagined

they had kept holy the sabbath-day; who, immediately taking the drive of gaiety, put to flight any serious impression of religious truths; and finishing the day which God has sanctified to his service, in frivolous occupations, musical meetings, or home parties, live the life of heathens, under the nominal profession of Christianity. But her condemnation of such self-delusion did not evaporate in useless argument or severe reprehension; nor, presumptuously 'thanking God she was not as others are,' did she ostentatiously mark the boundary of her own faith and practice.

Ellinor had at first been agreeably surprised to meet select and fashionable company at Mr. Vincent's house—what was then her astonishment when cards were introduced; and that, on one more private evening, Vincent himself proposed that the young people should make up a little dance? So gaily fled the hour, that both Ellinor and Miss Harrington, who was now her guest in their drive home, confessed to the delighted Willoughby that they had never passed a pleasanter evening. They had been agreeably surprised, because Miss Harrington had taken up Ellinor's former idea, that her sister-in-law was a methodist, strict and precise in all

her conduct, never paying nor receiving visits on Sunday; and the report of the custom of family prayers was alone the foundation of Miss Harrington's prejudice. The next morning, at breakfast, Willoughby had proposed to the ladies that they should give a little dance themselves; and after some badinage, and Ellinor's suggestions, every thing was arranged for a tasteful reception of their fashionable acquaintance.

"I wonder whether Mrs. Vincent will dance on the evening, or join the musical party," Miss Harrington said, as they were settling some necessary ornaments for the fête. "I hope she will waltz," replied Ellinor, "or it will appear particular for us to do so."

Willoughby, who had been employed removing some books, turned quickly round, and said, "You will not waltz, my dearest Ellinor, I hope."

"Not waltz, Willoughby! You forget how you once admired my attitudes."

"And for that very reason I wish you to relinquish the custom."

"Now don't be jealous, dear creature; you know how I love you. After this one evening I never will waltz again."

" Ellinor, have I ever yet restricted you in your wishes?"

" No; only when you would not let me kiss poor little Bijoux."

" Ridiculous, my love."

" Well but, dear Willoughby, on one condition will you consent to my waltzing?"

" I should have thought, that what I have already said might have influenced your choice."

" We had better give up the dance quite."

" As you please, Ellinor."

" Oh dear! now you are angry in earnest. Stay one minute, and only hear the conditions I propose."

Willoughby lingered at the door. Ellinor's beautiful eyes were suffused with tears—she laid her hand upon his arm; but he did not as usual say, " My best love, you must do as you like."

" Willoughby, you must hear my conditions. If your sister should waltz, will you let me follow her example?"

" My sister! Willingly, Ellinor"—and immediately pleading business, he left the room.

Ellinor heard the door of the house close after him, and she burst into an agony of tears.

Miss Harrington, who had been a silent but very observing spectator of the scene, tried to rally her out of the dismals, as she termed her tears.

"How the man must love you, dear, to be jealous about such a trifle. I would not even have compromised with him. Believe me, this is your day of power; and if your resolution fail, you at once become a mere passive machine in the hands of your husband."

"What can I do?" exclaimed Ellinor. "I have so set my mind upon waltzing; and yet I am wretched, because I am sure Willoughby is angry with me. I long to ask his pardon; and a reconciliation would be delightful. I have been very wrong."

"Nonsense; all will be forgotten before the evening; leave it to my management. Mrs. Vincent shall waltz, and then all will be right. For my own part, I would not appear if any one dared to prevent my doing as I liked. I suppose the next thing we are to be dressed like maiden aunts, or to copy the matronly Mrs. Vincent."

Miss Harrington might have proceeded unattended to by her friend; but the sound of

Willoughby's step on the stair, and the shutting of his study-door, aroused her feelings, and in an instant she burst into his room.

Willoughby had felt too much discomposed at the childishness of Ellinor's conduct to attend to the business in question. He was at first vexed at her adherence to her own wishes, so opposite to his own; he blamed her, and in a few minutes he blamed himself more for condemning so pardonable a vanity in a young and beautiful woman; and though still determined to negative the practice of waltzing, he was just on the point of seeking her again, and by affectionate persuasion endeavouring to convince her she was wrong, as Ellinor in tears and self-reproach stood before him. Her accusations of her own faults were humiliating, and at the moment sincere; but Willoughby felt, even when he folded her to his bosom, that the dignity of woman was better supported by the silent correction of her conduct, than in all the rhapsody of unmeaning confessions.

In this first serious instance of altercation Ellinor's blandishments prevailed; and she extorted a promise from him, that if Elizabeth were prevailed on to waltz, Ellinor might follow

her example: and she exultingly thought, if all differences were to end thus amicably, there was nothing so very formidable in the returning caresses of an adored husband; and consequently set at nought all the advice she had listened to, to beware of a first quarrel.

CHAPTER XXI.

ENGAGED in the bustle of superintending some necessary preparations for the dance, nothing more was referred to by Willoughby or the ladies, on the subject of their late altercation, but Willoughby had more than once painfully marked the ennuï and lassitude of that hour, which brought not with it the anticipation of pleasure and variety. To kill, not improve the time, seemed to be the general aim of his fair companions; listless indulgence on the sofa, the perusal of a fashionable novel, and the practice of music, were all the employments he ever witnessed at home, and when an interval of domestic quiet permitted, if he took up a rational book, he was seldom indulged with the perusal either to himself or aloud, interrupted by senseless trifling questions, or the accusation of being such dull company to read, when he ought to tell them all the news and anecdotes he had met with abroad.

Willoughby, it is true, was no friend to deep study or learned researches, but he could ad-

mire and feel gratified in the perusal of history, or charmed with the fascination of poetry; he had since his marriage formed the most sapient resolutions to become a serious and rational character—he had even entered into a sort of correspondence with his friend Donavan, and gave every hope that his mind, even in the midst of a transient dissipation, would ultimately find happiness in pursuits beyond the frivolity of the passing hour. It cannot therefore be wondered at, when Ellinor's mind and feelings did not seem to be in unison with his own, he should fear that the love of admiration and of dress, the waste of time and of health, would soon prove the lamentable consequence of her dissipated habits. It cannot be wondered at, that he felt a momentary disappointment in the being, to whom he was for ever united, and almost involuntarily compared her conduct with that of his sister's. He had also painfully marked Ellinor's entire ignorance of any thing like domestic management; hence, though all things were profusely and extravagantly ordered, the irregularity of servants, and the infringement of hours appointed for every social meal, spread an air of discomfort around, and it was a rare instance to find Ellinor at the breakfast-table

till Willoughby's patience was completely exhausted, and, between joke and earnest, dealing out his threats, that for the future he would breakfast alone.

Ellinor's captivating smile, or her childish petition for forgiveness, generally succeeded to restore the good humour of her husband, and he secretly determined, that as soon as Miss Harrington had left them, he would exert all his influence to induce Ellinor to attend more to their mutual comfort. His dislike to Miss Harrington daily increased; he could not help perceiving that Ellinor was frequently led by her opinions, and that whenever any trifling altercation ensued, Miss Harrington generally gained her point by the dangerous aid of flattery.

"When therefore Miss Harrington is gone, my sweet Ellinor will be herself again; she is very young, and so beautiful, that trifling errors may be pardoned. Surely the love she bears me will admit of such tender expostulation as a fond husband only can use."

And thus apostrophizing, he knocked at Vincent's door, having some little business to arrange, and assured there would be sufficient

time before their usual dinner hour, his own time being now by Ellinor's desire protracted till seven o'clock. He past the dining room—two covers only were laid—the excellent fire—the exactness with which every comfort was arranged—the elegant and the useful strikingly united in the disposition and arrangement of the table; all combined to convince him of how much consequence was the pervading eye of a mistress, to ensure the order and comfort of any domestic establishment.

He entered the drawing room, and he there fancied a peculiar air of comfort; he fancied the attire of his sister strikingly becoming, in the costume of fashion, "but doubling every charm it sought to hide." Vincent was hanging over her, with a countenance illumined by the tenderest sentiments; they were both perusing a letter, which seemed to give them mutual delight and satisfaction.

"Dear Willoughby, most welcome," Mrs. Vincent exclaimed, "we have just received a charming letter from my mother—there are so many kind messages to you and Ellinor, that I know not where to begin; but here, take the letter, and rejoice with us at the good account

she gives of all things. Here is also one to you, from your friend Mr. Donavan; you will find he is obliged to be in town in a few days."

The servant announced the dinner.

"What a methodical, unceremonious fellow that is," said Vincent, with a smile, "I believe nothing could prevent him turning our company out, lest we should find the soup cold. Willoughby, what say you to partake of our early fare? five o'clock is now I suppose almost gothic, and we can more fully discuss the business you came about."

"Although I do not think my wife would scold me, Frederick, for playing the truant, an engagement in the evening must prevent my staying to-day; nay, I will not be tempted," and taking the letters, he hastily bade them adieu.

In his walk home he could not forbear earnestly wishing that Ellinor would associate more with his sister, and again determined that all would be right when Miss Harrington left them; he had more than sufficient leisure before dinner to read the letters which had been given him. "Excellent and beloved mother!" he frequently exclaimed, as he traced the feelings of her maternal heart, "Ellinor will be delighted to receive such kind remembrances."

But the ladies were busily employed at their toilet, and Ellinor said, she rejoiced to hear Mrs. Coventry was well, and that she should better enjoy hearing the letters read with the desert after dinner. Then twisting her beautiful hair gracefully round her head, Willoughby thought she never had looked more enchantingly.

When they met at the hour, or rather after the hour of dinner, Willoughby threw a chance shawl over the exposed neck and shoulders of his wife. With an indignant smile she complained he had spoiled her dress, and instantly discarded the covering. Willoughby bit his lip, and endeavoured to command himself before the servants, and the entrance of Miss Harrington in a yet more studied state of undress, made him resolve to be very gentle in his animadversions, and to expedite that young lady's departure as soon as possible. Ellinor's private opinion was, that he had made his sister a long visit, and that the contrast of their attire, had increased his old fashioned notions; she almost fancied he was never in perfect good humour whenever he came from Vincent's house.

Since Miss Harrington had been her inmate,

a certain degree of pertinacity had marked Ellinor's conduct and opinions, for during the Parisian tour, and on her first entering into the gaieties of London, Ellinor scrupulously attended to all Willoughby's suggestions and taste, nor would have worn a flower or a pearl, not sanctioned by his approval. Not that she now loved him less, but the constant advice of Miss Harrington to sustain the independence of her own opinions, gave her the appearance of struggling for victory in every little contest.

"I will read you these letters, dear Ellinor," Willoughby said as soon as the cloth was removed.

Ellinor listened with tolerable attention to Mrs. Coventry's letter; "what a dear good new mamma she is!" was her only remark, and just as Willoughby was unfolding the other, little Bijoux jumped from a chair on the table, and overset a decanter of wine, which completely deluged Ellinor's dress and ornaments. She burst into a violent flood of tears, and Willoughby very coolly begged her now to make the shawl useful. Of course the confusion of the moment broke up all social converse; the letter could not be read, and the two ladies left the room, Ellinor declaring she was the most

unfortunate creature in the world. Miss Harrington contrived to soothe her into good humour, insisted on helping Mrs. Wilson to redress her lady, and took an opportunity to whisper, "What a sin it would be, to hide with vulgar covering such a complexion, such beautifully formed arms and shoulders!"

Willoughby left to himself, re-perused Donavan's letter, and more than once exclaimed, "I wish I could follow such counsel."

Donavan, after mentioning his own domestic concerns, avowing the comfort he experienced in having his revered friend Mrs. Coventry for so near a neighbour, and assuring Willoughby of her improved health and spirits, thus proceeds:

"There are few circumstances in this world, my friend, that could give such peculiar peace to my lacerated mind, as to see the cherished babe of my too tenderly remembered Matilda in the arms of your estimable mother. He truly 'brightens beneath her eye,' nor am I without the hope that the smiles of infant innocence, and the maternal superintendance he requires, gain daily upon her feelings. In all my rumi-

nations in what might have been my happy fate with the dear angel that is gone, in all the vain regrets that will sometimes disturb the tranquillity I am wishing permanently to attain, how soothing is the thought, that her conduct was the result of the purest principles.

" When I mourned her apostacy from all that was estimable in woman, I forgave—I pitied her! But now, oh! now there are moments when selfish regrets are hushed, and I could almost bless the omnipotent hand that has removed her from this chequered scene. I trust I need not say to you, cherish the sacred feelings of connubial love, and supported by that affectionate confidence which wedded hearts alone can experience, they will outlive the day dream of romance, and after years of friendly intercourse, with honest exultation the husband will avow, ' how much the wife is dearer than the bride!'

" To mark the progress of alienated affection, the decline of those tender assiduities, (the bond of married life, and which imagination anticipates may lead to the mind's more serious estrangement,) must on either side, prove a bitter and heart-breaking trial, and such as nothing but the consciousness of unmerited suffering can meliorate. And look we into the world,

shall we not pronounce, how much more frequently is this the fate of patient uncomplaining woman, than of man!

" A case in point, not far from my own parish, has perhaps led me to so inappropriate a subject; a chance circumstance introduced the lady to your kind mother's acquaintance, nor do we despair but that all expected evils may be lessened.

" I cannot help regretting, Coventry, that you are not earnest in the cause I have more than once advocated, namely, the following that profession in which your talents are so calculated to prosper, and in which your revered father was so anxious you should succeed.

" After all our air built schemes of felicity, our pursuit of happiness in the gay and various forms with which the world deceives us, there is no plan so likely to give permanent satisfaction to the mind, as useful and honourable employment.

" At a more advanced period of life, how sweet would be the reflection that you had honourably filled your allotted station, and that you had with manly independence realized the increased blessing of an affluent fortune. It would prove an additional source of satisfaction

to your wife to know, that your mind was properly and usefully engaged in hours of absence, and give greater zest to that mutual and domestic intercourse, which sometimes becomes insipid from the want of some casual or varied interruption."

Here Willoughby put down the letter, absorbed in some uneasy reflections, and after involuntarily exclaiming, "How little does Donavan know the disposition of Ellinor! Has she not almost extorted a promise from me never to be engaged in professional duties?"

He took up the paper, which touched more nearly on some controversial points of religion, which Willoughby had submitted to his friend's opinion; and Donavan then concludes with avowing his intention of being in town in a few days, and trespassing on Willoughby's hospitality.

On the morning of the anticipated ball and supper, Donavan arrived in town, and though he felt he could better have enjoyed the domestic party, he promised Ellinor he would not run away in the evening, provided he might remain an inactive spectator of the scene.

Splendid illuminations—well disposed flowers

—fashionably chalked floors, and appropriate refreshments—the lustre of jewels—the radiance of beauty—music and dancing, gave to this, as to other similar meetings, every attraction that imagination could anticipate; and Ellinor, delighted with the flattery she received, pronounced the evening to be one of the happiest she had ever known. By some unforeseen occurrence, Mr. and Mrs. Vincent were very late before they reached the scene of gaiety. Never had Elizabeth appeared more eminently lovely, and the beautiful brides called forth universal admiration.

Donavan had entered the gay scene with a mind determined, if not to enjoy, to pass an hour or two, however uncongenial to his own feelings, in compliment to his lovely hostess. He well knew that a ball-room was not a place to converse on subjects beyond the fashion of the day, and he had forced himself to address several young women on the common topics of conversation, and tired of the general flippancy he met with, he sauntered into a room adjoining the music room: a well known song, to which he had often listened in happier hours, caught his attention; he fancied the soft cadence of Matilda's voice now breathed on his

enraptured ear—then starting from the delusion, he was rushing from the spot almost despising his own weakness, determining to bear the semblance of composure for another hour, and then to indulge in the quiet of his own apartment, when his attention was arrested by the hurried entrance of two ladies, apparently in very earnest altercation.

"Nay, but dear Ellinor, consider how particularly precise your refusal must appear. Such a divine partner too! he has too much prudence to confess his adoration, but I am sure his eyes proclaim his admiration. I wish he had asked me to waltz with him.

"Come then, and Willoughby shall introduce you."

"No, indeed, I will not beg for a partner, besides, I have promised my last quadrille partner to waltz with him, therefore do, there's a dear creature, set me the example; as to Mrs. Vincent, (by the bye how astonished I am that all the gentlemen admire her so much,) we might as well persuade our great grandmother to waltz, as induce her to leave her husband's side. You have no chance to be at liberty from certain conditions."

"Have I not given my word to Willoughby?"

" My dear creature, he has this moment sat down to a rubber at whist; he will never know of your mighty disobedience, and should he find out how naughty you have been, a few of your interesting concessions will be productive of another delightful reconciliation. Besides, your beauty is so radiant this evening—your figure is so calculated for every varied and elegant attitude, that I should really think some twenty years hence it were time enough to act the sober and dignified matron."

Vanity had become the ruling foible of Ellinor's mind, this sort of persuasion weakened her scruples, and unfortunately the two gentlemen in question at this instant came into the room, and gently seizing the willing, and the half reluctant ladies, led them off in all the triumph of gallantry. Donavan's situation in the room precluded the possibility of being discovered, the rapidity of the speakers, and his own astonishment and disgust, had nearly overcome his self-possession; but indignant at the very idea of listening clandestinely, and at once comprehending the cause of so unpleasant a dialogue, he had determined to emerge from his obscurity, and endeavour to persuade the wife of his friend not to risk the displeasure of

her husband, by countenancing a practice, which he thought, unfashionable as he was, unbecoming female delicacy.

The entrance of the two gentlemen, and the sudden disappearance of the party, induced him to pause a few minutes, and the expressive words, " Poor Willoughby!" was his silent ejaculation.

As he was returning to the room appropriated for the dancers, he met Vincent and his wife going to their carriage, and they charged him with their kind adieus to Ellinor and Willoughby, not having been able to meet with them they said for the last half hour, from the press of company with which the rooms were crowded.

Donavan was obliged to pass through the room where Ellinor was waltzing, in order to reach his own apartment, and the buzz of admiration which sounded on his ear, he imagined might be gratifying to any one but a husband; and he could only hope Willoughby would be engaged for some little time at the whist table.

Ellinor excelled in this, and every fashionable dance, and the graces and variety of movement, and the studied display of a form and figure which no criticism could disparage, ap-

peared to fascinate all beholders. Donavan heard her spoken of in free and unqualified terms of admiration, whilst from the half whispered sentence of another, he could infer she was pronounced to dance too well for a wife, and, that no woman of delicacy ought to make such exertions for the public eye. At this instant he saw Willoughby advancing, and was just near enough to hear a very dashing young man ask, and one that had only just entered the rooms, introduced by one of Willoughby's acquaintance, and therefore not personally known to him, " If he could inform him of the name of the angelic creature, who was finishing her attractive waltz?" Donavan caught the arm of his friend, and gave some indefinite answer to the enquirer.

" Donavan, surely I am in a dream! Can my Ellinor have subjected herself to such gross and indiscriminate flattery?"

Donavan prevented him from approaching Ellinor, and said all that he could think of, to soften the indignant feelings which he saw by Willoughby's countenance were struggling in his bosom.

" True," he replied, " there is no crime, Donavan, in a modest woman following to a

certain point the customs of fashion." Then rapidly repeating all that had previously past on the subject, he continued:

"In such a scene as this, an essay on decorous or precise conduct, were most irrelevant. You know me too well, not to know, that I despise all particularity of manners, and prudish behaviour in the young and beautiful; but a woman's word ought to be so sacred to her husband, that not even the ridicule of every flattering fool, should have the power to convict her of instability, if not of an indelicate thirst for public applause and admiration."

Donavan continued to offer every palliative for Ellinor's disregard of her husband's request, and drawing him from the spot, urged him to forbear by any alteration of manner, giving publicity to a circumstance, which Ellinor herself would perhaps fully explain.

"I will be calm; you shall see how calm: a short time must disperse the motley crowd—I will even then await in silence that beautiful creature's excuses. But oh, Donavan, surely a country life must be preferable to this busy unimportant round of folly and vexation. I know not what I am saying—I deserve your smile

yet am grateful for the kind interest your countenance bespeaks."

"Nay, my dear friend, you must not feel so seriously; let me intreat you to act with calmness and indulgence, and this may be the first and last passing cloud to obstruct the clear prospect of future happiness."

Willoughby here asked with impatient anxiety, if Donavan had within the last hour met with the Vincents, and whether Elizabeth had also delighted her husband by waltzing? Donavan of course told him they were gone home, and mentioned the engagement he had made of breakfasting with them in the morning.

Willoughby now attempted to lay the blame of Ellinor's conduct on Miss Harrington's persuasions, and observing her at that moment shewing off all the airs of hoydenish coquetry, he repeated, "we shall never be happy while that girl retains such influence over Ellinor."

At length the busy hum of voices ceased, and the rooms were all cleared: Ellinor and Miss Harrington were, arm in arm, pacing the apartment—Willoughby and Donavan leaning near the fire, apparently in earnest conversation. Ellinor shrunk from the sometimes earnest

gaze of her husband. She would have given worlds to have spoken to him as usual, and endeavoured by flippant remarks on the departed company, to convince him she feared not his reproaches.

" After all, my dear," Miss Harrington whispered, " what have you been guilty of? You have complied with the fashion of the evening—you have gained unbounded admiration—you have followed the example of others, whose rank and respectability may set all animadversion at defiance: be firm, and do not make useless confessions of a fancied faulty conduct—do not be frightened by unjust reproaches. This is the moment to assert your own independence, unless you wish to sink into the very enviable character of a tame insipid wife, and set at nought your superior beauty and accomplishments."

" It is my breach of promise, Louisa, I lament, not the mere waltzing, for situated as I was, how could I do otherwise? And then Mr. Donavan is so severe."

" Ay, my dear, it is indeed very unfortunate, that this most immaculate of all friends should have the schooling of Willoughby; but see,

their conference is ended—come, come, let us meet the enemy with a good grace."

So saying, she drew Ellinor towards them, and with the common place declaration, " that it was time for all good people to go to bed." She followed Ellinor in silence out of the room. Ellinor was prepared for Willoughby's anger and reproaches, but the calmness of his manner, and his retiring to rest without recurring to the perplexity of the evening, was a proceeding so new and so unlooked for, she knew not whether to keep up her own resentful feelings for the late restriction, or to throw herself on his bosom, and expiate the offence in tears and lamentations.

How true is the remark, that the happiness of domestic life is oftener more dependent on daily and incidental occurrences, than on momentous actions. The woman who would shudder to impair her husband's fame or fortune, contrives by a careless or disobliging manner—by a trifling or selfish temper of mind, to harass him by contradiction, or to displease him by a waywardness of conduct. If the romance of Ellinor's attachment had a little subsided, she loved her husband with sufficient tenderness,

to be perfectly miserable at any abatement of his attentions, and, but for the pernicious counsel of Miss Harrington, she had immediately avowed her heartfelt repentance for having acted contrary to his wishes: but now the laconic answer, and the sullen deportment, convinced Willoughby that she did not feel having given him cause for uneasiness or displeasure.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was not very difficult for Donavan to contrast the domestic habits—the perfect confidence—the rational but endearing attentions of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent, with the ill-regulated household, and almost childish conduct he met with during his abode with Willoughby and his wife; nay, he with too much reason feared that their expenditure far exceeded their income, even in this early day of marriage, which, added to Willoughby's blameable indecision, in pursuing his professional duties, gave no very flattering promise of future comfort or respectability; more especially as they had no reason to expect, during Mr. Onslow's life, any farther addition to their fortune. Ellinor knew not the value of money, before marriage indulged to a fault, in every whim or fancy of her mind, her ornaments and dress were fashionably expensive. She knew not the nature of self-denial, but acting generally on the impulse of the moment, she had more than once lavished money on objects apparently distressed, flattered by

her dependents for a generosity unfounded in principle, and which little reduced her well-replenished purse. Since her marriage, neither time nor opportunity allowed the increase of charity. In a populous town, removed even from the occasional village tale of woe, it never entered her imagination, that the retreats of indigence were to be found, that the obscurity of modest merit could be cheered by the discriminating and affluent. Donavan had persuaded Mr. and Mrs. Vincent to accompany him to the parsonage for a few days: and Elizabeth felt in anticipation all the delight of seeing her beloved mother—of inhaling the pure breath of heaven, and of inspecting with her indulgent husband, the improvements and alterations on their lately purchased estate, which was in the vicinity of Donavan's neighbourhood. The plans they had formed were both rational and useful—the village school, and asylums for the aged poor, had not been forgotten; and cleanliness, comforts, and rewards for the deserving, were now in theory the blessings they hoped practically to illustrate. Elizabeth, after a drive into the city, in order to purchase some articles which she knew would be valued by Mrs. Coventry, made one of her usual and

friendly calls at her brother's house. Ignorant of Ellinor's uneasiness, she felt much surprize at the pensive cast of her countenance, and, "My dear Ellinor, surely you are unwell," was Elizabeth's anxious salutation.

Subdued by such unexpected tenderness, for Ellinor concluded Mr. Donavan had retailed all past occurrences to the Vincents, and fearing the severity of censure from Elizabeth, she burst into tears, and confessed she was the most miserable being in existence—that she had lost her husband's good opinion—that she would go home to her father; and in short, worked herself up to such a pitch of agitation, that Elizabeth almost dreaded to hear the cause of her extraordinary complaints.

At length Ellinor recovered sufficiently to give a tolerably correct account of all that had passed between herself and Willoughby—of his contemptuous silence and abstracted manner; and hinted the probability of Mr. Donavan's interference being the cause of their continued estrangement. Then relapsing into all the violence of grief and despair, she asked Elizabeth if so trifling a contradiction of a husband's wishes deserved such misery as she was suffering.

" Had I," she continued, " lost half our fortune by play, or been really criminal in other disgraceful respects, he could scarcely have more suddenly thrown off his accustomed tenderness. Alas! I love him too well for my continued peace! I well know how partial you are to Willoughby, but dear Elizabeth in this instance is he not a little to blame. I intreat you to give me your candid opinion."

Elizabeth could have smiled at Ellinor's self-inflicted miseries; but after soothing her into some degree of composure, she said,

" We will not determine on the importance of Willoughby's request; had it been even of the most trivial nature, I must think that the duty and affection of a wife should unconditionally have acceded to it. So far, my love, you have been to blame in acting a contrary part, and henceforth you will by doubting your own firmness be better enabled to avoid any just cause for repentance."

" Repentance! that is a strange word, Elizabeth! To submit unconditionally, is surely to render us mere passive machines, and to crush that natural independence of spirit——"

" Pardon my interrupting you, Ellinor, any argument of this nature must be irrelevant, and

defeat the cause you wish to promote. Let us turn to facts, and not bewilder ourselves in useless speculations. Your husband is offended, but you love him with sincere affection. Let reason and religion prescribe the remedy to restore your mutual peace and confidence."

"I do not see what religion has to do in the business. Praying and going to church would not restore Willoughby's good humour."

Absurd and childish as were these replies, Elizabeth persevered in the kindest manner to endeavour to bring Ellinor to a more reasonable frame of mind: she felt convinced how much she had been tutored by Miss Harrington, and therefore gently and delicately hinted, that generally speaking, a husband should be a woman's first and only confidant; and after exonerating Mr. Donavan from having influenced Willoughby's mind, she said,

"Now, my dear Ellinor, though I am no friend to degrading or senseless confessions of folly, exposing, as it were, the mind's weakness, without one effort to reduce an occasional theory to practice, I can only repeat, that in this present case, it is your duty, and by the tears which you cannot suppress, I am persuaded it is also your inclination to make a

candid avowal to Willoughby of the error you have committed in forfeiting your word, and disregarding his request."

At this instant Miss Harrington entered the room, who bowing formally to Mrs. Vincent, asked her dearest Ellinor "If she had any new cause of uneasiness." Elizabeth explained.

With the utmost simplicity, Ellinor intreated Miss Harrington "not to think her weak or unmindful of former advice, but she could no longer exist without living in the unabated affection of her dearest husband, nor should she ever again fear the severity of this dear creature as you and I have sometimes dreaded."

"When Miss Harrington knows me better," Elizabeth mildly said, "I trust she will think my severity can never extend to the presumption of condemning, where I ought to endeavour to advise or to console. When Miss Harrington is a wife, I flatter myself she will also think, that nothing could compensate for the loss of an affectionate husband's confidence and esteem."

Miss Harrington checked the uncourteous reply which hovered on her lips, and with a smile which might be differently construed, availed herself of the employment of looking

over some new and expensive music Ellinor had lately purchased. She was well aware of the indecision of her friend's character, and policy, and every selfish consideration made her dread to lose the present influence she retained over Ellinor's mind; nor in this calculation, were useful and ornamental presents forgotten; duplicates of elegant apparel were generally the consequence of their usual morning drives to the various emporiums of fashion, and Willoughby had hitherto from every motive of delicacy and generosity of feeling, been silent on the subject of such unnecessary expenditure. Miss Harrington dreaded to return home at the age of sixteen, and just initiated by a gay and thoughtless mother in the vicinity of Bath to all the variety that dissipation could command, she was suddenly removed, from motives of policy, to reside with an uncle and aunt in a distant part of Somersetshire, who having no children, promised to adopt Louisa, on the condition of her living with them. The contrast from liberty to precision, the habits of the house being as unchangeable as the Median laws, the want of society, and of all that could make life desirable to a vacant and uncultivated mind, or even to one less informed than Louisa

Harrington's, rendered her on the first change of residence completely miserable. The persuasions and promises of her mother had at length soothed her into something like compliance with the customs of her formal relatives; nor was the expected large fortune in reversion, the least inducement for endeavouring to become a fixture at Oak Lodge. Of course the reverse of her present situation was a delightful one, and the attentions she had secretly encouraged from one of Willoughby's occasional guests, alternately raised her hopes, or excited her fears of the seriousness of his intentions. It was the partner with whom Ellinor had waltzed, and she even felt jealous that he should so openly admire her beautiful married friend.

When Elizabeth had succeeded by reasonable and affectionate argument to calm the perturbed feelings of Ellinor, after mentioning their intended visit at the rectory, she arose to depart, and just as she was stepping into the carriage, Willoughby came up to the door.

"Ever welcome at this house, dearest Elizabeth. Have you seen Ellinor?"

Elizabeth would not detain him, lest Miss Harrington should by ill-timed counsel unsettle

her companion's too frequently undecided mind, she therefore merely said,

" I have seen her, Willoughby, and if I possess a grain of penetration she is impatient to see you once more in your own affectionate character." She then ordered the man to drive home, and Willoughby, taking the welcome hint, hastened to the apartment where Ellinor was now really weeping the tears of penitence.

Willoughby had indeed nearly determined to relax from his assumed austerity, for whilst he pronounced, " she should have kept her word," he wished to excuse her want of resolution, from youthful vanity and the persuasions of Miss Harrington, " We must not," he thought, " expect perfection, perhaps situated as she was—" " Pshaw," then impatiently exclaiming, " It will not bear to reason upon, and in all the inconsistency of feeling, he was returning home to draw from Ellinor, by a renewed and affectionate manner, the final confession of her error, and the delightful assurance of her unabated love.

Scenes of reconciliation are commonly only interesting to the parties concerned. Fortunately Miss Harrington had left the room when Willoughby entered.

Ellinor was resting her head on the arm of the sofa, and did not observe who it was that had opened the door. He approached, and caught her to his bosom, and in one quarter of an hour she had made every humiliating confession, that she was even ready and willing to leave London, and all its gaieties, exclusively to enjoy his dear society; that he was the whole world to her, and in the usual pathos of tears and supplication, intreated that she might again become his own and beloved Ellinor.

It would not be doing justice to the lovely penitent, not to affirm that her expressions were the dictates of the most perfect sincerity, and that, at the moment, Willoughby's happiness was all that she thought worth living for. Be this as it may, peace seemed to be permanently restored, and if ever Willoughby's heart whispered, " Ellinor's character yet wants that stability to insure the continuance of domestic happiness," it was at these moments. Her youth, beauty, and inexperience, were generally her successful advocates, and the same bewitching smile, or naïve reply, as in the days of courtship, retained their wonted power to charm his senses, and to tranquillize his mind.

Donavan had observed with the anxious so-

licitude of friendship during his visit at Willoughby's, that prosperity was the foe of rational and serious reflection—that idle habits and scenes of gaiety were contributing to render Willoughby a trifling and inactive character, notwithstanding some recent and well sounding resolutions of a permanent reform.

CHAPTER XXIII.

On the morning before Donavan left town, he had been engaged for some time writing in Willoughby's library; and from revising and altering the sermon he intended to preach on the following Sunday, he wished to refer to the Scriptures on the point he was discussing. But, for the Bible, his search was vain; nor among the elegantly bound folios with which the library was adorned could he meet with scriptural reference to assist him. Willoughby at this moment entered the room, and after taking from an obscure corner the sacred Book in question, covered with dust, although it appeared to have been rarely opened, a conversation ensued, whereby Donavan was too fatally convinced that the deistical principles of Willoughby's mind rendered the volume of inspiration of little value in his eyes.

At length Donavan said, "It is very lamentable you should thus fight against your own happiness; but I can scarcely believe that your whole wit and skill can dare to deride the

expectation of a future state. There must be moments, Willoughby, when the baseless fabric which infidelity raises will sink into nothing; when that strength which is founded on the Scripture can alone support the afflicted, the erring, or the doubting mind."

"A man cannot believe as he pleases. As to a future state, I must take my chance of that; and when I see thousands professing the doctrines of Christianity, inconsistent in their conduct, uncharitable in their judgment, continually misled by their passions and evil inclinations, I heartily despise and reprobate such contemptible hypocrisy.

"After all, every man must judge for himself; and whilst my conscience acquits me of deliberate transgressions, I, who certainly believe in the existence of a God, believe also he will not condemn his creatures for any variation of opinions which experience and conviction may give rise to."

"Coventry, you were my earliest and best-loved friend. However deeply I feel and lament this very recently experienced variation in your opinions, I must perceive this is not the time for controverting them. I am thankful that your excellent father is removed from the

trial of witnessing the effects of worldly examples on the mind of an only son; and it is my earnest request that Mrs. Coventry may remain ignorant of your present delusions, unless you would wound her mind in the tenderest point—unless you would shorten her days by too natural anticipations of the fate of a being she adores."

Willoughby appeared affected; but quickly recovering himself, he said, "Donavan, to you only do I wish to speak on these subjects; yet indeed you take up the subject too seriously. Believe that I have given all due attention to your arguments in favour of Revelation; nay, that I will at some future time oppose them against my limited credence, nor scruple to recant my present opinions when I am convinced of their fallacy. Come, my good fellow, let us dismiss the subject, and go in to Ellinor with a less woe-begone countenance, or she will think you have been lecturing her husband with unmerciful severity."

"I will only take up your attention a few minutes longer, just to remark on what you have advanced. You say a man cannot believe as he pleases, and that you must take your chance of a future state; that religion is lost in

your estimation, because its purity and advantages are sometimes abused by ignorance or hypocrisy; that man must judge for himself; and, after depending on your own all-sufficient righteousness, you avow your belief in a God, investing him with the attributes which best suit your own temporizing conscience, forgetting that he is perfect in justice, as well as in mercy and wisdom. The time was, Willoughby, when you would have shrunk in disgust from such shallow and ill-founded sentiments; for you have not the plea of ignorance to offer in excuse for mental apostacy; and it were almost an affront to your understanding to point out the fallacy of your assertions and remarks. In the world, my friend, there are minds so engrossed with the riches, the pleasures, or the cares of life, that they will not see or know any thing which may disturb present enjoyment, or interfere with habits of covetousness and gain; and therefore hard indeed is the task to persuade such beings to place their future happiness on the basis of true religion. Hence infidelity is their creed, and this world their supreme dependence; hence we daily meet with those trifling and contemptible characters which strive to enjoy the self-privilege

of independence, and, perhaps, not even at the hour of death can they believe that for all these things there is a day of judgment.

"I will not say excuse my seriousness; I will only now add, that your mind's disease has, I am persuaded, been contracted by 'evil communications'—by associating with those scorners of the day I have but imperfectly sketched; and that I trust and hope their influence will be short as it has been rapid, and you will not forget the awful resolutions you breathed on the tomb of one parent, nor will I repeat that the happiness of your still surviving one is bound up in the happiness of an only son."

This sort of conversation was prolonged beyond the intention of either party; and after Donavan's departure, an hour of seriousness shaded Willoughby's countenance; but the engagements of the day, and Ellinor's rather unappropriate questions as to the cause of his gravity, banished every sombre feeling, and Willoughby was again the gay convivial companion, or the brilliant trifler of the party. From early youth his mind had wanted that steadiness of character which could either guard it from error, or render the resolutions of a repentant hour salutary and permanent; and now

that the comforts of affluence and the seduction of example exhilarated his spirits, and, as it were, sanctioned the vacillation of his religious principles, he wished to set aside till a more "convenient season" any self-communion, and to lose in the vortex of dissipation the sometimes serious calls of an awakened conscience. Had he been united to a woman of a strong mind, who could have discriminated his failings, and led him more by example than precept to the nobler purposes of our present existence; had she encouraged an honourable occupation, instead of childishly lamenting his every little occasional absence; hours of vacuity would never have intruded, and the scenes of domestic life would have gained new and daily interest by repetition.

Willoughby, in the days of courtship, had admired, as he termed it, the manly independence of Mr. Onslow's character, and that worldly morality which guarded him from dishonourable actions. As the familiarity of their intercourse increased, Willoughby unfortunately adopted Mr. Onslow's repeated opinion, that "he can't be wrong, whose life is in the right;" and which imperceptibly weakened the influence of Donavan's arguments on the importance

of the real motives of our conduct and actions. And now, whilst he gave him every credit for acting up to the principles of his profession, he himself was fast straying from the path of conviction—from the only path which can lead to present and future happiness.

As time passed on, an unfortunate intimacy increased with many, whose attractions had no deeper basis than the meteor of an hour. Willoughby's hospitality sometimes suited their convenience; and Willoughby's beautiful wife was gratified by their apparent partiality to her husband, and their flattering admiration of herself. Loss of time and loss of talent might have circumscribed the consequences of such frivolous society; but Willoughby soon selected one favoured companion which chance had improved into friendly intimacy, and which was contributing to give a dangerous latitude to his opinions, and to conceal the path of ruin under the enchantments of its accustomed temptations.

If Willoughby rode or walked, Sedley was his companion; and morning perambulations generally secured an invitation to dine, and with Willoughby to escort the ladies to places of fashionable resort. Mr. Sedley was a man of

specious manners, and without any depth of intellect could converse with fluency on general subjects. He had run through a good fortune by indulging in every reigning vice and folly; and at this period his finances were ever in a fluctuating state, from the destructive vice of gaming. He determined, however, to proceed with great caution in his present views and intentions. The extraordinary beauty of Willoughby's wife had been his first attraction; but policy and self-interest induced him rather to make her husband his victim, or at least by degrees to wean him from domestic habits, and improve his bias for play, he having already discerned in Willoughby's mind that characteristic indecision by which he had been so often led astray.

Mr. Sedley had learnt from Willoughby the future expectations of Miss Harrington, and report confirmed her as the undoubted heiress of a very large fortune; but as he wished nothing at present to be conclusive, he only paid her those silent but expressive attentions which every female knows better how to appreciate than seriously to understand. Mr. Sedley was the gentleman who had waltzed with Ellinor, and the same that Miss Harrington had then

pronounced divine. The natural consequence of their present domestic intercourse was Miss Harrington's growing and apparent partiality; and Sedley took care, by an uncertain and inconsistent conduct, alternately to raise or to discourage her hopes of a confession of his passion. This sort of conduct could not long be concealed from Ellinor; and her questions to Miss Harrington drew a romantic and prolix confession of Mr. Sedley's behaviour. Unacquainted with his real character, she looked forward to their union as an event much to be desired, and good-naturedly extended her invitation to Louisa to remain in town till Willoughby and herself had settled the period of their visit to Mr. Onslow and Mrs. Coventry. A few hints on the subject to her husband rendered him less vehement for Miss Harrington's departure—his new friend also engrossing in some degree his time and attention. Hitherto he had been scrupulously exact in keeping his domestic engagements, the tears and supplications of Ellinor having more than once induced him to send excuses to the invitations abroad, which Sedley's raillery had compelled him to accept.

One day, after Sedley had been extolling him

as a pattern for husbands, and expatiating on the happiness of not being united to a woman who would take advantage of such indulgences, whose smiles were the reward of every occasional absence, he added, "but, by the bye, Willoughby, you must for once break through the precision of domestic rules—you must dine with me to-day. An old friend of your father's is to be of the party, who is most anxious to see you: he came to town this morning, or of course you would not have had so short and unceremonious an invitation." Willoughby excused himself. "I shall begin to think you are afraid of your wife, completely under female government, if you do not oblige me"—adding, in the common-place style of raillery, all that could induce Willoughby to think it was for the mutual comfort of a married pair to vary the monotony of home society.

Willoughby paused; and knowing Ellinor would have a companion, yielded to the solicitations of Sedley.

At the usual dinner hour Ellinor received a note from her husband. Before the servants, the ladies were both silent and sullen. Louisa, disappointed of the presence of Sedley, when the cloth was removed, by her ill-advised persuasions induced Ellinor almost to think she

was a neglected and forsaken wife. After passing some hours of ennuï together, Miss Harrington declared her head-ache had so violently increased she must retire to bed, leaving her friend with this sapient counsel—"Shew your husband how much you have felt his absence; for if you receive him with your usual smiles, this first deviation from punctuality will not be the last. Remember, my dear, how faithfully he promised in the morning not to be a moment after the dinner-hour; but, bon soir, I am grieved I cannot keep you company till he comes home—you know my head-aches are despotic."

Fretting, playing with Bijoux, and at times running her fingers over the keys of the instrument, she passed some of her solitary hours; then throwing herself on a sofa, she wept in petulance and resentment. "Unkind Willoughby," had just burst from her lips as his well-known knock aroused her from her reverie. The candles burnt dimly, the fire was nearly out, and an air of confusion and discomfort pervaded the apartment. Willoughby entered—he would have embraced her with tenderness—she repulsed him in silence. "Is it for this reception, my Ellinor, I have resolutely left a gay con-

vivial party? Are you ill, my love? Where is Louisa?"

"You had better return to the party you seem so feelingly to regret having parted from."

"Nay, my best love, do not be so unreasonable and captious. When have I ever left you before?"

"Did you not promise to be punctual at the dinner-hour? But now, I suppose, you have found out the way to enjoy a separate society, I may be left to weep and mourn in solitary sadness."

"Surely, my dear Ellinor, this is all very childish. I could not foresee that you would be alone—that Miss Harrington would have an unfortunate head-ache. Come, come, give me one smile, and let me have tea or supper."

"Tea or supper!" interrupting him; "a pretty hour for tea or supper truly. I am so miserably cold, and have suffered so much all the evening, that I must beg leave to go to bed."

Willoughby had drank more wine than usual, and cut to the heart at Ellinor's unkind reception, he answered with asperity; and she, remembering Miss Harrington's advice, endeavoured not to soften the irritation of his mind, but rang for her attendant to light her to bed.

Willoughby, left alone, did not experience very enviable reflections. "Well as I love thee, Ellinor," at length he said, "I cannot be thy slave. Oh had she received me this evening with one conciliating smile, cheered me with one kind expression, I could have made due allowance for tender reproaches—I had almost said, for the childish reproaches of an over-indulged mind." Then hastily exclaiming, "Faith, Sedley, I believe you are right in your opinion of women," he sat for some time in deep rumination, till unconsciously he fell asleep on a sofa, and was awoke by the gentle hand of Ellinor pressed upon his forehead.

Whilst Ellinor was undressing, her resentful feelings a little subsided; and after dismissing her woman, she sat for some time endeavouring to excuse her own unkindness.

But Willoughby came not, and she began to be seriously concerned: twice had she counted the passing hour, and had vainly tried to doze away all unpleasant remembrances.

Her anxiety was now past endurance; and hastily throwing on a dressing-gown and shawl, she sought, with all her natural impatience, the room wherein she had left her husband. The tender inquietude of her manner soon led to re-

conciliation and peace; and had she profited by the lesson that evening might have taught her, she would have been saved many heartfelt and unavailing regrets.

The time was approaching for her and Willoughby to visit Mr. Onslow and Mrs. Coventry. No serious quarrel had occurred of late. Ellinor's situation called forth all her husband's tenderness; and though he was sometimes tempted by Sedley to play the truant, by not noticing her sullen looks, or resenting her ill-timed reproaches for any fancied neglect, he generally succeeded to restore Ellinor's smiles and good-humour. His patience was however sometimes severely tried. If he unexpectedly brought in a friend with him to dine, she would either complain of indisposition, or sit silent and abstracted: if he took up a book or newspaper, she would, half playfully, half resentfully, take it from him, saying, "an image were a better companion than a prosing husband—that he ought to be as entertaining at home as he was abroad:" if, fatigued with exercise, he reclined on a couch, and asked her and Louisa to give him a little music; the instrument was out of tune, or she had a cold, or she was tired of all her old music; and immediately seized with a

studious or industrious fit, she would take up an unfinished novel, or busy herself with her drawing: if he wished her to walk with him, the weather was too hot or too cold; the carriage made her ill; company was fatiguing, and solitude irksome. The same irregularity in domestic arrangements pervaded the house; and the impertinence of servants or trades-people was not unfrequently the grand topic of conversation. In short, Ellinor was perfectly a stranger to that happy art of rendering home comfortable to her husband; and he generally took refuge from the approach of any thing unpleasant in the quiet of his own apartment. Besides every affectionate consideration, Willoughby, from political motives, wished that no shadow of altercation might appear before Mr. Onslow, nor any painful retrospect from Ellinor prejudice her father against himself. He did not doubt her affection, or that she would willingly prejudice her father against him; but her sometimes extreme simplicity, and the shrewdness of Mr. Onslow, made him resolve on his present guarded and considerate conduct. Miss Harrington, wholly engrossed with her own plans and prepossession in favour of Sedley, was less annoying to Willoughby than usual; yet he rejoiced in

the idea, that their expected visits would relieve him from her constant society.

Ellinor could not help remarking, that her friend was now far less communicative on the subject of those " airy nothings", which every romantic girl in love knows how to convert, as suits her own wishes and expectations; and, that though in company Sedley was more reserved than usual, she had made her observations on some apparently chance tête-à-têtes which had taken place between them.

The fact was, Mr. Sedley, from pecuniary embarrassments, and from the fear of disobliging a rich old uncle, could not at that period marry Miss Harrington; and feeling none of that anxious solicitude inseparable from real love, he would certainly have laughed at her partiality, and despised so easy a conquest, if her large fortune in reversion had not induced him to make something like a declaration of his attachment, as soon as he learnt that the time was fixed for her return into Somersetshire. But binding her to secrecy, as the only means of securing their eventual happiness, and artfully gaining her written promise of marriage, without binding himself in the same manner, she fancied she was acting with great resolution

and judgment in the reserve she was practising towards her friend. How rarely, if ever, a woman is justified in receiving the secret addresses of a lover; there is generally something wrong where concealment is necessary; and she frequently weakens the esteem and good opinion of the man, by entering into a secret engagement; and will probably be ultimately convinced that neither her mind nor person were the attraction, but that mere interested views had influenced his conduct.

Ellinor's good-nature, and some degree of curiosity, induced her to question Miss Harrington very closely a few days before they were to leave town; and the latter anticipating a future invitation if she disclosed the secret, made a full avowal of Mr. Sedley's attachment—of the reasons for its present concealment—avowed that the sweet remembrance of Sedley's vows of everlasting love would cheer the dreary months of absence and solitude at the dreadful old hall—and added, "Oh, Ellinor, when next we meet, who will be so happy a being as your friend! I, who have laughed at love, have lived on the flattery of universal admiration, and almost envied your superior beauty which unconsciously commanded it in every

circle, can have now no pleasure but in Sedley's dear presence. Swear to me, my beloved friend, inviolable secrecy; for worlds, Sedley would not at present acquaint either your husband or yourself with our engagement —nay, I have so faithfully promised not to tell even you——"

"Do not repent," she interrupted; "you may indeed trust me: and be assured that, till you permit, Willoughby shall remain ignorant of your confidence."

The romantic style which Louisa had adopted was so in unison with Ellinor's mind and feelings, that she promised to invite her again when they had a settled habitation either in town or country; and in the mean time to promote Sedley's intimacy with her husband, that she might continually acquaint her of his welfare and his proceedings.

On consideration, Ellinor recollected that Willoughby had more than once declared Miss Harrington should never again become their guest; but circumstances, and ways and means, might occur to induce him to alter his resolution; and she never anticipated any negative that might interfere with her wishes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mr. Onslow received Willoughby and his daughter with great kindness and affection. Country hospitality, and country neighbours possessed the charm of novelty to amuse, if not to interest Willoughby, and in all the usual inconsistency of his resolves, he determined that rural occupations and a country life should henceforth insure his domestic happiness. He saw Ellinor, the idol of her father—the ornament of every circle. He continually witnessed the smile of exultation on her beautiful countenance, at the unqualified flattery and approbation of her juvenile acquaintance, while every matron extolled her as a pattern for imitation, and the criterion of elegance and fashion. To display her costly dresses and sparkling ornaments to her more intimate associates, to correct their errors in any fashionable costume, and to charm all hearts by her musical powers, to be looked at, not worshipped by the surrounding cottagers, for alas! her hours had ever been differently employed than in acquainting herself with, or relieving the wants of the poor, were gratifications to that vanity which had

never yet been satiated by adulation; and, "Dear Willoughby, we must live in the country," ever delighted her now enraptured husband. Mr. Harcourt alone saw through the flimsy veil which shaded from common view the trifling propensities of her mind; he had known her from a child, and gave little credit to the superficial smiles of good humour, nor value to the shewy accomplishments she possessed. He found her still unequal to any thing like rational conversation. Presuming on the delicacy of her situation, she never heeded the exertions of others, or thought that she received sufficient attention either from her flatterers or domestics.

But at length both Willoughby and Ellinor began to tire of the confined routine of Mr. Onslow's mansion. The former, without exactly defining the cause, was dissatisfied and restless, and Ellinor having no more dresses to exhibit, nor fashionable anecdotes to relate, gave way to every trifling indisposition, and sometimes by not rising till noon, and then reclining on a sofa till evening, excited the anxious feelings of her father on account of her interesting situation.

She had herself induced him to promise to give a ball to the surrounding gentry before

the expiration of their visit. Mr. Onslow, concluding Ellinor would neither feel inclination nor strength to fatigue herself by joining in the dance, the day of their departure was fixed—the ball arranged, and Ellinor delighted by the bustle and confusion of ordering, and making the necessary alterations throughout the spacious house. "Dear Willoughby, what a prize would some of our London beaux be this evening, the elegant Sedley, the entertaining Mountford, &c."

"Be contented, Ellinor, and lament not visionary advantages. I am surprized your father has allowed such latitude to your ever restless fancy."

You are very wise, and very grave all of a sudden, Willoughby, but perhaps such a humour will be most appropriate for our next vegetating visit. I am sure I wish we had a settled residence."

"Ellinor, you shall have one, inconsiderate as is your present request. You hurt me by talking of a vegetating visit to my mother; if you prefer to stay here, I will go without you."

"Oh, Willoughby, did you love me as in the days of courtship, could you have made such a proposal?"

Mr. Harcourt's entrance dispersed the rising

cloud, though his penetration quickly perceived the traces of a disturbed mind on the countenance of Willoughby; but Ellinor, instantly delighted with some beautiful exotics he had selected for her, forgot her own regrets, and her childish accusation of Willoughby.

Unable to withstand the temptation of displaying her perfection in dancing, exhilarated by music, and entranced by flattery, Ellinor's evening exertions were beyond her strength, and the next day alarming indisposition threatened a serious disappointment of her father's and her husband's hopes; an apparently inconsequential fall in the morning, having contributed to the lingering confinement she was doomed to. The medical attendant having pronounced that many weeks of absolute quiet were necessary to insure her future well doing.

Too ill to contend the point, their departure from Onslow-hall was necessarily deferred, and till she was in some degree convalescent, Willoughby ceased to lament the newly discovered monotony of a country life. When Ellinor was perfectly out of danger, she was forbidden the fatigue of travelling, and he, imagining that for months there might be no prospect of their departure, was daily contriving some plausible pretext for a visit to town, and to pass a few

days with Mrs. Coventry and his friend Donavan. One morning, whilst at breakfast, tête-à-tête with Mr. Onslow, the post brought him a letter from Sedley, stating, that the house he had wished to engage was now vacant, that the proprietor was then in town, and that no time should be lost in his own personal enquiries.

"You must go to town, Willoughby," Mr. Onslow said, "I know the house and situation well: Ellinor is in good quarters: I think you may depend on every possible care during your absence, and remember you are to draw on my banker for the needful on such occasions."

This was no unpleasant arrangement to Willoughby, yet it was some time before he could reconcile Ellinor to being left behind. But Mr. Onslow laughed at her childish regrets, and Willoughby endeavoured to convince her that from pecuniary motives they ought not to defer the purchase of the house.

Willoughby's protracted absence was more truly caused by the insidious conduct of Sedley, than by real or important business. The latter endeavoured by constant dissipation to counteract the effects of transient repentance: he well knew he had no novice to deal with, that Willoughby had run the wild career of plea-

sure, and that though he now resolved never deliberately to yield to temptations, Sedley so artfully adapted them to seasons and opportunities, that the midnight revel had been more than once the forerunner of too deep and serious play for the finances of Willoughby during his stay in town.

He wrote frequently to Ellinor, whose answers were generally in all the pathos of complaint for her unfortunately protracted visit at Onslow-hall, the lassitude of indisposition, and its necessary restraints depressing her spirits, and giving rise to future anticipations of ill.

Willoughby really felt, and would have continued to feel all a husband's anxiety, had she not so often reproached him for leaving her under such circumstances, and affirmed that she was the most miserable and neglected of human beings.

Alas! in his reflective moments, he had discovered, that want of mind was the grand obstacle of congeniality of feelings and sentiments in the married state, and that accomplishments alone were not sufficient to give permanency to the fascinations of beauty, however they might afford variety, both in the enlarged, and domestic circle.

CHAPTER XXV.

Some expected events had marked the lapse of another twelvemonth. Ellinor was settled in her new habitation in town, and the mother of a delicate, but lovely boy. Vincent and Elizabeth had taken possession of their country residence in the vicinity of Mrs. Coventry's neighbourhood; their happiness mutually increased by the birth of a little girl. Donavan's protegé was the darling of Mrs. Coventry, and the general favourite of all. The new and tender name of father had in some degree weakened Sedley's influence over Willoughby's pursuits, but as he could not listen for ever to nursery stories, or hear with patience the cries of infancy, Ellinor sometimes accused him of barbarity, whilst she half sportively appealed to Sedley to be the judge of a mother's cause, and of all her imaginary fancies. Sedley had of late received from her the most marked attention, and here good nature, not vanity was her motive. She had persuaded Willoughby to invite Miss Harrington to stay with her during

her lying-in, and Miss Harrington still remained in uncertain anxiety in regard to Sedley's intentions. He would not give up her written promise, and talked of love, without proving it by any confidential explanations, and as Ellinor imagined he was ignorant of Miss Harrington's disclosure of their situation, she hoped he would in time give to her a candid elucidation of his present conduct. Hence he was always a welcome guest, nor even in the absence of her husband did she deny herself to his accidental visits.

How far this apparent preference might have excited Sedley's vanity and presumption, cannot be determined, as they were just about to leave town for the summer months, and hitherto he had always prefaced his flattering speeches, with " As the friend of your husband, I presume, all lovely as you are, to aspire to your confidence and esteem."

Indisposition and concurring circumstances had hitherto prevented Willoughby and Ellinor visiting Vincent and his wife, since they had been settled at Beech-park; their arrival was hailed with the purest delight by the little assembled party, Mrs. Coventry, her nursery, and Donavan, were enjoying with the happy

Vincents, all that hospitality and affection could command, and Willoughby again became enraptured with the delights of rural retirement. The house, the grounds, the park, were all in the first style of taste and elegance. No expense had been spared to unite the comforts and luxuries of life. Spacious apartments, boudoirs tastefully and usefully furnished and ornamented—a library, whose shelves could boast of a judicious and well assorted collection of every modern and classic author, commodiously appropriated for study or amusement, whose windows commanded a diversified and beautiful view, opening upon a lawn which led to a walk impervious to the meridian sun, from the tastefully training of trees and shrubs. In short, the whole mansion bespoke not only the superintendance of taste, but consideration for the convenience and comfort of the meanest domestic; nor was a well chosen collection of books omitted, adjoining the housekeeper's apartment, for the instruction or recreation of all under her guidance and protection.

The old gentleman's fortune, which Vincent inherited, had turned out far beyond even his most sanguine expectation; unclaimed dividends put him in possession of such sums of

ready money, that no check was necessary to the unbounded liberality of his expenditure.

Hence every ideal plan of benevolence had been successfully realized. Elizabeth's village school, and other charitable buildings, were in a flourishing and useful state, and the village which joined the park was now the seat of neatness, contentment, and order. The cultivation of the adjacent ground for a small adjoining garden to each humble tenement, afforded innocent employment to the leisure hours of the industrious, and useful assistance to their frugal but improved repast. Elizabeth ever held this idea in view, that if relief to the indigent be not an incentive to industry, it encourages idleness, and defeats the cause which charity intends to promote. She was careful in discriminating the real wants of her poorer neighbours, from the artificial complaints of indolence or discontent. The severity of the winter season—a vain endeavour to gain employment—unforeseen accidents—sickness, or domestic calamity, never sued in vain for immediate relief, and no music could sound so sweet on Vincent's ear, as those occasional effusions of gratitude from the village poor, when they pronounced a blessing on his beloved Elizabeth

for some casual relief, or permanent alteration in their circumstances. The building for the asylum of a limited number of aged persons, was just completed, nor did Elizabeth omit in every establishment and cottage, to bestow some appropriate reward for uniform industry, cleanliness, and good habits. No impediment but illness ever prevented Vincent and herself from going to church both in the morning and afternoon; her mild rebukes, but above all, example, from the great house, proved of salutary effect, and the morning and evening service soon began to be as constantly attended by the cottagers as their necessary avocations would permit. Neither did Elizabeth allow the youthful and the thoughtless to imagine, that every Sabbath duty was comprized in going to church. She generally contrived to make her calls in the village on a Monday, when she could praise or dispraise what she had observed the preceding day. And not prohibiting the innocent recreation of an evening walk, and encouraging the neighbourly offices of kindness and charity, few, if any, felt the Sabbath a day of restraint, but hailed its approach as a joyful rest from labour.

Ellinor had been advised to use general and

moderate exercise, and sometimes accompanied Elizabeth through the park which led to the village, but nothing could induce her to breathe the air of the children's school-room, or enter the pretty cottages which adorned the road. She should be liable to catch any incidental disorder. She disliked all the cant speeches of poverty, and she really thought, as she had heard her father often say, "People might be righteous overmuch," she would hardly let her infant look at a child, lest he should take some complaint, and though she would not allow Willoughby to make the comparison, she herself could not help contrasting the healthy appearance of Elizabeth's child, with the pallid cheeks and delicate limbs of her own. A more promising infant had seldom been born, and nature had furnished that abundant nutriment, which a properly interested mother on no consideration could ever withhold, but Ellinor had heard from the lips of ignorance, that she was too delicate to undergo such constant attention and fatigue, and that the slavery and confinement of many months would prove her lamentable sacrifice.

We will do Ellinor the justice to say, that her inexperience gave every possible credence to

such absurd ideas, and that she really was not aware of the risk she permitted her child to encounter, in the perilous arrangement of his nursery establishment. Willoughby, a novice on the subject, dreamt not of the probability of his child's future inconvenience, although he thought he should have better estimated Ellinor's tenderness, had she not declined the trouble of nursing her own child from selfish or trivial motives. He imagined that the months of infancy were ever the months of wailing and crying, and he looked forward to the time when his boy could walk and talk, and every day interest him by some new improvement of intellect. But now he contrasted the appearance of the two infants, and contemplated his sister in the most interesting of all employments, and consequently Ellinor could not rise in his estimation: he however checked the vain complaint of her want of real maternal anxiety and feelings, and endeavoured to banish serious reflections, both on his own account and on her's.

Ellinor had seldom arisen in time to join in the brief but comprehensive petitions, and thanksgiving of the morning, and she more than once had expressed her surprize that

Elizabeth persevered in a custom which was probably a subject of derision to her saint-like looking domestics as soon as they had left the room.

Elizabeth, in the mildest manner, replied to Ellinor's thoughtless speech, declaring it was her firm opinion, that no master or mistress of a family should be deterred from performing their duty, because some worthless individual knew not how to behave on serious occasions; that the five or ten minutes devoted to this service neither wearied their patience, nor impeded their daily occupation, that the choice was ever optional to visitors at the house, to join the family circle.

Donavan saw with pain the uncertain tenure of Willoughby's resolutions. He felt convinced that Ellinor was not the woman to render him happy, and more than suspected that Willoughby was of the same opinion himself. The hour of romance had past—his attentions were now not those of the heart, but to ensure her smiles and good humour, for she, jealously alive to a suspension, or decline of her power, scrupled not to proclaim her misery at any fancied slight, or diminution of her husband's regard. Sense and prudence might have done much in

settling his yet unsteady principles; the mother of his child—the mistress of his family would eventually have regained her influence, and domestic happiness the victory over the transient enjoyments of a dissipated life, had not the querulous reply, or the ill-timed reproach, irritated his feelings, and almost unconsciously engendered disesteem and indifference. When Willoughby was exclusively in company with Mrs. Coventry, or his sister, he was happy and affectionate, and Mrs. Coventry believing what she so ardently wished, the happiness of an idolized son, suppressed any momentary suspicion of a contrary opinion. A few days before the termination of their visit at Mr. Vincent's, Mrs. Coventry remarked to Ellinor, that she thought her boy did not look well, and gently hinted some error in the nature of his food, and that the nurse was too apt to give him more than was necessary. Ellinor, who thought she was the fondest mother in the world, felt alarmed about the child, but answered Mrs. Coventry rather ungraciously, that a child who was always crying must be pacified with food, and, that as to the nurse, her character had been undeniable.

In the middle of the night an unusual bustle

and noise, a violent knock at Ellinor's chamber door, announced there was real cause for the disturbance, the nurse, in loud and terrifying accents proclaiming, that the child could not live five minutes. Without resolution or fortitude on common occasions, Ellinor almost shrieked herself into hysterics, and Willoughby precipitately ascended to the nursery, followed by his horror struck companion. The child, in dreadful convulsions, was a sight so agonizing to parents, that even Willoughby was appalled, and Ellinor fell senseless on the floor. The servants crowded around, and giving Ellinor in charge to some of them, Mrs. Coventry took the little sufferer in her arms, and instantly ordered what her experience conceived would best tend to the infant's recovery. On a sudden, in much agitation of mind, Willoughby whispered to Mrs. Coventry, that the infant had never been christened—that the ceremony had not taken place from various preventions, the chief had been Mr. Onslow's continued procrastinated visit, and his wish to have the child named Onslow, in his presence, that he himself did not think it was a matter of much consequence, as a child, it might be presumed, must die innocent of any actual sin. Mrs. Co-

ventry at that moment did not express her feelings and opinions, shocked as she was at so unpardonable a neglect, and such ignorant reasoning on the subject. Without hesitation she intreated Vincent to send for the clergyman of the parish, and to her dismay, she recollected a rheumatic fever at that instant confined him to his bed; but, said Vincent, "I will dispatch a messenger for our excellent friend Donavan, and trust that the infant's life will be spared till he has received the ablution of baptism, for however we may reason about the innocence of a child, we cannot be so plausibly convinced that the guilt will not rest upon the parent, for such a palpable neglect of one of the most sacred ordinances of the Christian Church. Upon what grounds so many neglect, or think lightly of an institution authorized by our Saviour's practical observance of it, is an enquiry, we may affirm, more easily made, than satisfactorily answered, and, if by Scripture it be pronounced an essential sacrament, what human presumption should slight, or unwarrantably defer entering into so heavenly a covenant?"

Some such reflection as this passed through Vincent's mind, after having dispatched a servant and carriage for Mr. Donavan; the dis-

tance was only four miles, and the child grew evidently worse, appearing to suffer severely. Willoughby was totally unmanned, and if he thought that the hour of death were so awful at such a tender age, what might it be when mental inquietude was added to the strength of maturer years? "Oh, mother!" at length he said, "Why should an innocent being like this be so afflicted? What are we to think of the mercy and government of Providence, which could in an instant restore our darling to health, or release him from this dreadful scene?"

"Forbear," my dearest son," she replied, "to question the power, the mercy, or the decrees of God. How know we but the invisible world, just opening to receive an infant spirit, may be delegated to soothe the apparent agonies of the body, that for the wisest of purposes our feelings may be thus aroused, but that the apparent convulsions of nature reach not the invulnerable part of our dying infant, and let us take comfort in the blessed hope, even on the authority of Scripture, that of such is the kingdom of Heaven.

"The struggle is nearly over, if human prayers can avail, may life be spared till we can witness his being made an inheritor of our

Redeemer's promises. If not, I have no hesitation to avow, that it is my firm opinion, he will find eternal rest on the bosom of mercy."

Willoughby briefly explained why she had been deceived in regard to the child's baptism. That the intention of naming it till Mr. Onslow's arrival, from various circumstances had been deferred, and that neither Ellinor nor himself remembered, or perhaps thought it of sufficient consequence to contradict what they had affirmed would immediately take place.

The wretched mother, still nearly in a state of insensibility, received every attention and kindness from the anxious circle in the nursery; and as they knew she could not actively be useful, but distressingly violent in grief and lamentations, they did not regret the necessity of her absence, and hoped soon to prepare her for the expected trial.

In a shorter time than could reasonably be imagined, Donavan, by his presence, cheered the watchful party, and now a scene ensued, which increased every vain regret, and added poignancy to the mournful hour. Donavan, prompt and feelingly considerate on such occasions, wasted no moments in useless enquiries, or common place consolations. But, alas! be-

fore the awful rite of baptism could be administered, on the instant of the book being opened, the unconscious infant breathed its last, a deep drawn sigh proclaiming, the soul of innocence was parted from the frail but beauteous tenement.

As if such an event had not been expected, for some moments all were lost, stunned as it were by so great a disappointment, but soon the impressive and consolatory prayer which Donavan offered at the throne of grace, tranquillized every mind, and even soothed the regrets of paternal affection. In such a scene all the best propensities of Willoughby's nature were called forth, and had he wisely doubted his own instability in the hour of temptation, he would never have again risked his fame or fortune in the dissipated scenes of this uncertain life. In a few hours Ellinor recovered from the stupor her faculties had slumbered in, and she beheld her husband, Mrs. Coventry, and Elizabeth, watching by the couch on which she reclined. The mournful event was made known to her with all due tenderness and consideration. It were useless to endeavour to describe the effect of the disclosure on her mind. Hours of violence, even invective

against the decree of Heaven, almost amounting to frenzied desperation. " I cannot see Mr. Donavan, he will preach patience, and perhaps counsel with severity ; alas ! who can bear up against such a loss ?" she had several times frantically exclaimed. But when a chance meeting with him soon occurred, and he clasped her hand in all the fervour of brotherly commiseration, sat patiently by her side—heard her complaints, and soothed her grief—allowed that afflictions could not be received with apathy by creatures so formed as we were to feel their pressure ; that indulged and obstinate sorrow could only be displeasing to Heaven, Ellinor felt for a short time the soothing effects of Donavan's kindness.

As week after week passed on in the dull uniformity of sorrow, and the caprice of Ellinor's temper, most trying to all around her, Willoughby proposed a change of scene and place to arouse her to something like active employment, and an invitation from her father arriving just at this period, it was soon a settled plan to pay him an immediate visit, and now, to the surprise of Elizabeth, Ellinor began to talk of having more elegant mourning, and of other

arrangements, and even wrote her orders to town for the most expensive attire.

Willoughby, pleased with any change of her mind and feelings, hailed with satisfaction the pettishness of her complaints; and by a little well-timed flattery, and some real compassion for her recent disappointment, a transient smile would sometimes irradiate Ellinor's countenance, and she parted from her kind and anxious friends with wonderful composure. Not so, Willoughby, he had visited the grave of his infant, and for a few minutes had thought with seriousness on past events; the affectionate and parting embrace of a beloved mother and sister, had nearly overcome his firmness, nor did a too sure conviction of the instability of Ellinor's mind, contribute to raise his spirits, or paint the future in exhilarating colours.

The mournful expression of Willoughby's countenance displeased and irritated Ellinor. She thought herself entitled ever to be the first in grief, or any species of attention, and she reproached him, that her sorrow was now unnoticed, and that he seemed to feel more at leaving his mother and sister, than for the loss of their lovely infant.

" Ellinor, try me not too severely, unjust as you are by such a remark; I will forbear. Come, my love, give me your hand, let us not widen our mutual disappointment by idle recrimination."

Softened by his kindness, Ellinor as usual solicited pardon and forbearance, and the rest of the journey passed in tolerable tranquillity, nor till she entered the nursery appropriated for her little boy, did she dwell on her peculiar misery, and the strange decrees of Providence. Hysterics, and all the violence of unsubdued grief, nearly tired out the patience of her really suffering husband, and he could hardly persuade himself Ellinor was the same being who had so recently wept in despair from mortified vanity and trifling disappointments.

Mr. Onslow received them both with great hospitality and kindness; and when Ellinor, in all the violence of grief, was lamenting the death of her child, he made so light of the loss of such an infant, and so ridiculed her regrets that it had not been baptized, that she willingly adopted the opinions of her father, and mentally pronounced him a superior being to those she had lately associated with.

Willoughby had not parted with his friend

Donavan without frequent conversation and reference to serious and important subjects, but he had yet to experience that the transient impressions of religion never yet afforded " that peace which the world can neither take nor give."

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